



U.S.A.,
CANADA,
EUROPE_{AND}
THAILAND

MAR APREM

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**TRAVEL TO
USA, CANADA, EUROPE
AND THAILAND**

**TRAVEL TO
USA, CANADA, EUROPE AND THE
KINGDOM OF THAILAND**

APRIL - OCTOBER 1999

A travelogue of three tours between April and October, 1999

Dr. MAR APREM

**THRISSUR, INDIA
2000**

**Travel To
USA, CANADA, EUROPE AND THAILAND**
(English) Travelogue

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Copyright : Author

Date of Publication: 13th June 2000

No. of Copies : 1,000

No. of pages : 104

**Printed at : MAR NARSAI PRESS, High Road,
Thrissur - 680 001**

**Published by : MAR NARSAI PUBLICATIONS, High Road,
Thrissur - 680 001**

**Price : Rs.50/- (India)
\$ 3 (Outside India)**

**Cover Design : Andrews Computer Graphics,
Thrissur 680 005.**

DTP : digitech dtp, koratty - 680 308.

**Cover Photo : Church of the Reformation in Wittenburg
where Assyrian Qurbana was held.**

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FOREWORD

Metropolitan, His Grace Dr. Mar Aprem is an unusual ecclesiastic. He makes people laugh. Bishops generally do not do so. His series, 'Bishops Jokes' accompany me when I travel. They make me laugh and relax and quite unlike similar series compiled by some others, can be read and relished in full public gaze. Clean, innocent jokes, touching on human foibles, oddities and peculiarities tickle our ribs no end and let in a ray of happiness to light up the day. They tempt you to be less serious, less formal, They tell you that to err is human, and to laugh at them is, a divine gift.

The Clergy, particularly the Higher Clergy is generally perceived as a mirthless lot - too serious, grim and hopelessly wedded to customs and practices, often reminding you of a miniaturised 'Last Judgement.' It is difficult to make conversation with them, last. The embers of a tete-a-tete die out too soon, left untended by the flow of gaiety, wit and of course, bantering. There are exceptions, like my own Metropolitan, His Grace Mar Chrysostom Mar Thoma, a rare prelate with whom you can bowl and bat with jokes and witticisms as if in a Test series, of the pre-match-fixing period, till stumped. His Grace, invariably takes the Ashes or Rubber, as the case may be, since with his vast arsenal of lethal strokes, he has no match. But by and large, people do not associate humour with cloth. This is where His Grace, Dr. Mar Aprem, makes the difference, indeed a happy difference.

His Grace is a prolific writer. For his sixty years, his tally in terms of publications, including the present Volume is sixty. One book for each year. Quite an impressive feat, nay a record. These publications fall into different categories - Biography, Church History, Humour and of course Travelogues - an imprecise term

for books on travels. His Grace has written in English as well as in Malayalam. It is heartening to see that as the quantity increased, the quality did not suffer. His Grace has something new, original, to say in his books. And he says it in a very simple, direct style. As an author, he is honest and candid, and writes with great sincerity. His basic interest is sharing his thoughts and experiences with others. It is evident that in this he has been successful to a great extent. The present Volume reveals yet another facet of the personality of His Grace - his ability to march with the times. He is not only computer literate, but an adept in employing the talents of this "genie" to advantage. I wonder how many other Bishops pack a lap-top on a trip abroad. It is very re-assuring to note that the Supreme Head of an ancient Church, has a modern mind.

Chronicling travels calls for unusual talents. Bishops travel without restraint. It is part of the gracious package they inherit as Shepherds to their Flocks. The Shepherd has to go to his flock to tend it. Occasions are myriad for a Bishop, who loves to travel, to be on the move: there are international organisations and their many fora, conferences and consultations, seminars and symposia, and then the exclusive privilege of celebrating rites - from baptism to burial. But travelling opportunities do not make a teller of travelling tales. It needs the rare gift of travelling with the senses alert - seeing, hearing, savouring, absorbing and of course rejecting. And above all the ability to recount and record. His Grace Dr. Mar Aprem is richly endowed with these unique gifts. How I envy him! I have also traversed many Continents. Memories of my travel remain within me like an undisclosed adolescent love. Nothing has gushed out from me yet like a torrent of undisguised passion, devotion or

obsession.' It would appear that there is an arid zone in my emotional plane. His Grace is an exception - here too. He has written extensively on his many travels.

His Grace Dr. Mar Aprem visited the United States, Canada, Europe and the Kingdom of Thailand during the period between April and October last year. He had been to some of these places earlier. But he has travelled this time too with the curious eyes of a boy, and the critical faculty of an older person. These two combine, to make His Grace's travel tales engaging. I read the book from cover to cover in one sitting. Of course, there is virtue in all accounts being short. Brevity is indeed the soul of wit.

This Foreword by a lay man, to a Volume by one of the very senior and respected prelates of Kerala is a tribute to the generosity of the Author. We have been meeting and exchanging views and cracking jokes for quite some years. Perhaps, His Grace thought, the time has come to move to the printed words from the spoken. This is no occasion to pay a tribute to Aprem Thirumeni, whom I have always regarded as one of my own Methrachens. Thirumeni has treated me as a member of his own extended family. As I close this short Foreword, which has not added much to the readability of this Volume, I pray that His Grace may continue to satisfy his wanderlust for long, keeping his imaginative eyes wide open, and recording on his lap-top his impressions and views on men, and places, and keeping the tally going on to make a century, as His Grace moves on, needless to say, gracefully.

Trivandrum, Kerala,
India.
June 10, 2000.

Dr. P.J. Alexander I.P.S.
Director General of Police
Kerala State (Retd.)

INTRODUCTION

Even after the advent of Television and Internet into daily life, books are still being published. The Times History of the World first published in 1978 is in its fourth edition, So far the one and-a-half million copies have been sold. This book which costs \$ 80 weighs two-and-a half kilograms. It does not fit into a normal book shelf. I do not know how many people attempt to read it from cover to cover.

The TIME dated September 20, 1999, p.57 states,

Since the dawn of the computer era, pundits have been predicting the demise of the book. But, though the profit margins are being squeezed there is still no sign of terminal illness in the global publishing industry. Now along comes a thumping great dinosaur of a book that would seem to suggest the pundits have point: some publications might work better in digital form.

Salman Rushdie of *The Satanic Verses* and Vikram Seth of *A Suitable Boy* are two famous personalities in Indo-Anglian literature today. Vir Singhvi commenting on Vikram Seth's latest book *An Equal Music* remarks that Rushdie is "loud, prolific, mercurial, aggressive and full of strong opinion about everything. Vikram is a man who does much less than Rushdie who has little to say to strangers and who retains a quiet intensity." (Sunday, Calcutta, dated 9-15 May 1999)

While writing this travelogue I happened to read in the TIME, April 26,1999 about the woman who wrote travelogues. In 1872 an English woman named Isabella Bird was advised to

travel to Australia to improve her health. It was her first travel abroad. She was 41 years of age. In p.6 we read:

She ended up spending six months down under, during which she not only restored her health but caught a travel bug. She wrote seven keenly observed and wickedly funny books about her physically challenging {and highly exhilarating} journeys in Asia, America and Africa, where she made her final jaunt - a horseback trek over the Atlas Mountains of Morocco - at the tender age of 72.

My travelogue reveals my Indianness as well as my Church affiliation. It is not easy for me to hide them. The TIME magazine's Book Review of the latest novel of the internationally known Indian writer Vikram Seth's **An Equal Music** observes that he "makes no attempt to flaunt his Indianness". In the TIME, dated May 24,1999 we read in p.50

His characters are called Helen, Michael, Julia, Billy. They live in London and perform in Europe or the U.S. There is no mention of India, not even of a curry meal or a sitar concert. Seth takes on the book world as just another writer with a novel in English, demanding no indulgence for the exotic experience of being from a different commonwealth. And he does it with great flair and feeling.

This approach is different from that of an Indian born writer, although now living in England, Salman Rushdie of Fatwa fame whose sixth novel (**The Ground Beneath her Feet**, Jonathan Cape, 575 pages) has been reviewed in the same issue of the TIME. Rushdie's characters have Indian names such as Vina Apsara, Piloo Doodhwala. The reviewer (Nisid Hijari) opines that Doodhwala is a "thinly disguised caricature of formerly jailed

Indian politician Laloo Prasad Yadav”.

Yes, I saw the same Laloo on TV at Bahrain on my journey to America on April 16, shouting at the government in the Lok Sabha leading to the fall of the Vajpayee government, by just one vote. If Laloo was not out of jail there would have been a tie in which case the government would not have resigned. Confidence and no-confidence being equal, the government would have gone on for some more time.

Now in April 2000 Laloo Prasad Yadav is in jail again. He has won the election to the Bihar Assembly in March 2000. He is now an M.L.A. in Bihar ruled by his wife Rabri Devi, as Chief Minister.

Although his book was meant to be published in 1999 itself, it took me unusually long to do the actual writing as two trips took place in October. Then an unexpected trip to Vienna and England had to be made from February 28 to March 22, 2000. All these trips and writing the second Ph.D thesis delayed the publication of this travelogue.

It is not the mere narration of things seen, but it gives information about the Holy Synod of the Church of the East. Those readers interested in Church History will find it useful and informative. Now I plan to combine two or three trips in one travelogue. In that case the information will be brief. But in the busy world we cannot expect a religious leader like me to find time for voluminous books.

As usual I am grateful to those who offered hospitality in their homes during these trips. This book will be a reminder of the happy visit to their homes. When will such a visit to Canada take place? It is beyond anybody's capacity to predict.

Travelogues such as these are written for the benefit of the readers who get information about the Churches and countries I visit. Even if my readers forget me they should not forget the book and the information which it passes on.

Arundhati Roy of Booker Prize fame speaking in Calicut, Kerala on January 15, 1999 refers to this point. Her speech is quoted below from FRONTLINE, Feb 12, 1999, p.82

“My book, **The God of Small Things**, has had a very noisy journey into the world. Like other books, it has been praised and criticised, loved and sometimes hated. Amidst the din of this peculiarly 20th century personality cult around authors, people often remember the writers and forget their books”.

Whenever I get opportunities to travel abroad I read and observe things and write them in travelogues for the benefit of those who do not have such opportunities.

I am grateful to Fr. P.P.Shaju who got most of this matter on to my laptop. There are several others who helped me to finalise this travelogue one year after the first journey in April - May 1999. Although I had announced in my last travelogue that the book entitled **To Germany via USA and Canada** was due to be published in 1999, that was not to be. It will form part of the present travelogue. Thanks to Dr. P.J. Alexander, former Director General of Police of Kerala State, for writing a fitting foreword.

Trichur, Kerala
13 June, 2000

Mar Aprem

CHICAGO SYNOD

The 8th Holy Synod of the Assyrian Church of the East was summoned on Monday 19th April 1999. When the invitation was received I was surprised. I was expecting a Holy Synod meeting only in 2000 A.D., as we had met in June 1997 in Chicago.

On Sunday 11th April I conducted an ordination service in Trichur. It was the biggest in the Church of the East in India in the 20th century. Six deacons were ordained as priests. Four were ordained as deacons, five as sub deacons and one as Qaroya (Reader). There were two deaconesses too. I made quick arrangements for laying the foundation stone of the St. Joseph's Church at Kunnamkulam on 15th and flew from Cochin Airport on 16th April 1999.

On Saturday 17th April I reached Chicago. The Assyrians who came to receive me at the airport told me that the priest and the deacon had been at the airport to receive me the previous day. My fax message to the Patriarch received on Friday did not make it clear whether I was arriving on the same day or the next day. I thought that since I mentioned that I was leaving India on Friday it implied that I would reach Chicago only on Saturday.

As there was visa for five years I had no problem in arranging a quick trip to the USA. The day after my arrival in Chicago, I celebrated Qurbana at the Mar Geevarghese Cathedral at 7201, North Ashland in Chicago, Illinois 60626, on

Sunday 18th April. I stayed in the Assyrian home of Mrs. Juliet Kasha where I had stayed during the previous Holy Synod two years earlier along with Bishop Poulouse Mar Poulouse.

During the Qurbana I was happy to see my sister Leela's family. She and her husband Prof. Alexander Alex had come from Orlando, Florida to their daughter Asha's house to be with me for some days. Their son Dr. Saje and his wife Dr. Sonia had come from Indianapolis with their daughter Christina.

My younger brother Addison Mookan arrived from Atlanta, Georgia with his daughter Grace Marie. My eldest brother Jose Mookan came from Santa Barbara. It was an occasion for a mini family reunion for us, as I didn't have enough time to visit them as on previous occasions.

I had typed the report to be submitted to the Holy Synod in my computer. But my laptop began to give trouble. Moreover I had not carried my printer as it was big and heavy. I tried to connect my laptop to the printer of Asha's computer. It did not work. Asha's husband Paul Furlow volunteered to help me. He had good speed. So I dictated the report to him and he handed over to me the print- out of the report.

Since most of the Bishops had already arrived by Sunday, we met at the Patriarchate on Sunday evening just for an informal gathering. It provided time to meet other Bishops whom I had not met since the Holy Synod of 1997.

It was very nice that Mar Giwargis Sliwa, Metropolitan of Iraq, handed over to me a letter signed by Sister Olga Noel, Mother Superior of the convent of the Virgin Mary, Arasat Street, Babil Quarter, Bagdad, Iraq. The name of the Monastery in the language of Jesus (Aramaic) is printed at the top of the letter

thus : *Rabbanyatha d Marth Mariam d edtha d'Madnha.*

In this letter of encouragement Sister Olga Noel congratulated the Indian Church that we got a nun in the Indian Church. It was on the memorial day of Virgin Mary on 15th August, 1998, which was the second anniversary of the founding of this order in Bagdad on 15 August, 1996. I had the privilege of meeting Sister Olga Noel in Chicago and in Los Angeles in 1997 when we had the Holy Synod in Chicago in June 1997. Let me reproduce below the letter as an encouragement to those girls who think of becoming nuns in our Church in India and abroad.

His Beatitude Mar Aprem,

In a prayer of gratitude for God's multitude of grace, we have the pleasure of extending our congratulations on the occasion of taking the habit of a sister of ours from the Church of the East in India so that she may become a new seed of giving love and Christ's unlimited generosity. We spread our prayers in the brotherhood of Christ as the language of our love along with the flowers of Joy on the path of this new step.

May the blessing of the Lord be with you always.

Sister Olga Noel.

The rules and regulations of this first sisterhood in the Church in recent years was also handed over to me. It is in English. It is well drafted and is useful to our Churches in all countries to follow.

The bold decision of the Holy Synod to recognize all prelates and clergy of the old calendar section of the Church of the East is a welcome news to all those who want peace and

progress in the Church of the East.

The present split started in 1964 when the then Patriarch H.H. Mar Eshai Shimun (d. 6 Nov. 1975) changed the old (Julian) Calendar into the Gregorian Calendar. The split became complete in September 1968 when the Metropolitan of India Mar Thoma Darmo, an Assyrian, came to Bagdad and consecrated three prelates first, Poulouse Mar Poulouse (on Sept. 13), second, Mar Aprem (on Sept 21st) and third, Mar Adhai (on Sept 22). The first two being Indians made unity between the two calendar groups in India in November 1995.

But Mar Adhai who was consecrated Catholicos Patriarch in Feb 1972 insisted that he should be recognized in his rank, if unity is to be a reality. Although H.H. Mar Dinkha IV of the new calendar and H.H. Mar Adhai II of the old calendar met in Chicago in 1984 and had discussions and dinner together, unity never materialised. The Synod of both groups meeting separately in 1990 in Bagdad appointed a peace committee of four Metropolitans (two each from both sides). But the attack on Kuwait in 1990 prevented the peace committee from meeting in Bagdad in August, as planned.

Peace talks continued at various levels. One objection some people raised was "How can you have two Patriarchs in one Church?" The question was genuine. But are Christians to fight with each other? No. So, as a necessity and a special case both Patriarchs can continue to use their titles until God's appointed time.

The peace loving people will welcome this step to end the division within an ancient Church. Let all members of the Church pray and work for unity of this much persecuted Church

which was kept alive by the blood of our forefathers.

Let us not raise many questions to avoid unity. Many people are tired of these questions and bargaining for power and position. Let us unite in all world. That should be the only item in our agenda.

Both groups have their rights to raise questions and delay the process of unity. Some people have doubts as to how this unity can work. Man's wisdom cannot solve it. Our generation has split their Church since 1964, for more than 35 years. This is half of the "Babylonian Captivity" of 70 years. Let our generation itself unite. Our children will never forgive us if we hand over this split and hatred to the Church of the 21st century. Let us bury our differences now. Tomorrow is not in our hands. We may not see unity if we do not act immediately.

Moses wandered in the wilderness for 40 years without reaching the promised land. It was Joshua who could reach there. The decision of the Holy Synod of Chicago of April 99 is a step in the right direction at the right time.

The fact that the people clapped their hands at the Synod Banquet on 25 April 1999 is a positive indication how the Assyrian people welcomed the news that both Patriarchs talked over telephone (Chicago and Bagdad) for unity. So let us forget the differences we have and act like one. Also let us make sacrifices in order to keep this unity. Let us pray for both Catholicos Patriarchs, His Holiness Mar Dinkha IV of Chicago and His Holiness Mar Adhai II of Bagdad.

MASSACRE OF THE INNOCENTS

The saddest event during my visit to USA in April 1999

was the massacre at the Columbian High School in Littleton, Arkansas. The class video monitor had shown at 4/20 instead of April 20. It is a code word for drug. The marijuana is supposed to contain 420 different chemicals. It was the birth day of Adolf Hitler.

At 11.25 a.m. Tuesday April 20, 1999 Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold armed with a semi-automatic rifle, two sawed-off shotguns, a semi-automatic hand gun and a dozen of homemade bombs started killing the innocent students.

Twelve teenagers and a teacher aged 47 were mercilessly murdered.

On Sunday 25th April I celebrated Holy Qurbana at St. John's Assyrian Church which is situated at 1421 W. Lawrence, Chicago 60640. Fr. Charles Klutz is the vicar. This parish consists of second and third generation Assyrians. I had celebrated Holy Qurbana in this Church for the Easter in April 1977. Archdeacon Sadok d Mar Shimun was the pastor of the parish. He had been my friend for long. I had visited him in 1967 during my summer vacation between my studies in New York and Princeton. My last meeting with him was in 1984 in Chicago. After his death this Church came under the administration of Bishop Mar Aprim Khamis, under His Holiness Patriarch Mar Dinkha IV.

I was happy to meet Deacon Laurence Namato, the deacon of this English speaking Assyrian parish. Fr. Klutz who is not an Assyrian ethnically speaks the language. I am sure that he must have taken great pains to learn to speak the Assyrian language.

I was very happy to meet Dr. Eden Naby (Frye), an Assyrian who works in Harvard. She told me that she had seen my books in Harvard. She invited me to visit Harvard when I have an

opportunity to be near there. I know that my friend Dr. J.F.Coakley from England works at Harvard. He is known to many of our Church members through his book 'The Church of the East and the Church', of England.published from Oxford in 1992. Dr.Coakley had written the foreword to my book 'Teach Yourself Aramaic'.published by the Mar Narsai Press, Trichur.

At breakfast time after the Holy Qurbana David Oomen and his wife Lalitha came with their two daughters to visit me. I had been in their home in July 1997. This time I did not have time to go to their home. Therefore they came here to see me.

DETROIT AND CANADA

Some years back I had obtained Canadian visa from their Consulate in Chicago.

I was planning to do the same this time too. But to my great disappointment I was told that the Consulate in Chicago could no longer issue visas. We had to go to Detroit for obtaining the same.

His Holiness Mar Dinkha IV, Catholicos Patriarch of the Church of the East was kind enough to arrange for my trip to Detroit. Next morning Fr. Benyamin Benyamin, the priest of our St. Marys Church at 13304 Toepfer, Warren, Michigan took me to the Canadian Consulate in Detroit. We got the visa within two hours in spite of a large queue.

As we were waiting for the visa Fr. Benyamin Benyamin escorted me to the Marth Mariam Church in 13304 Toepfer, Warren, a suburb of Detroit. Although it is a small congregation organized in recent years they have built up an active congregation.

They have a book for the Church choir in Assyrian and English. Some songs are translations and some others are transliterations. Fr. Benyamin is a hardworking priest and has written a book of prayers for 365 days of the year. He hopes that it can be useful to our Church members, if it can be printed.

He surprised me saying that he had read my book The Council of Ephesus of 431 AD. 'Where did you read it?' I

queried. He said that he has got a book in Arabic. I emphatically denied that I ever wrote any book in Arabic. He insisted that he has read the book. Like a doubting Thomas I demanded to see it. He took me to his home and showed me the book.

I was delighted to see my book in Arabic for the first time. I expressed my desire to possess a xerox copy, if he could not find me a real copy of this translation of my work.

This book was the thesis which I submitted for the Master of Theology Degree in 1966 in Bangalore, India. This was translated into Arabic by the Assyrian Literary Committee in Northern Iraq. I told him that I never gave permission to anybody to translate my book. But later I realised that I had granted permission to some Assyrians in Mosul, Iraq when I celebrated Qurbana in Mosul, in March 1990. I do not know why the translator or the publisher failed to send me a copy.

The priest and two Assyrian members of our Church promised to drive me all the way to Toronto. They had to take me only upto London, Canada. I had agreed to stay with our Church member from Thrissur Wilson Padavan, son of Padavan Isaac Master.

Crossing the Canadian border was strenuous. After the immigration officials had checked my passport the customs officials had to check my car. Perhaps my beard gives me a terrorist look!

Stay with Wilson, Sicily and their children Dona and Deen was pleasant. Although I had planned to stay there only for one day I stayed there an extra day as another member of our church Dr. Davy Emmatty M.Sc., Ph.D. staying in Stockton, California had come there on an official trip.

On Saturday, May 1st we said goodbye to the family of Wilson Padavan who is a Manager of Bell Canada the Telephone company. Dr. Davy Emmatty and I reached Toronto before noon.

Sunny Nellangara is the younger brother of my brother-in-law Dr. N.V. George of Rugby, England. Sunny has been living in Canada since 1967 or so. I spent some time with Sunny and Shanta. Their eldest son Svarghese is near Los Angeles and second son Lona is a lawyer in New York.

I had to visit five homes in two days. I rushed to the house of Seena and Jolly Palissery. It was the birthday of their darling daughter Anaika. I returned to the house of Sunny to have supper with other Trichurians.

The night I spent with Bishop Mar Emmanuel Emmanuel. Some Assyrian Church members were there.

On Sunday 2nd May I celebrated Qurbana in a High School auditorium where about 500 people were present. Nearly twenty were Indians.

Bishop Emmanuel suggested that next time I celebrate Qurbana in Malayalam language so that the Indians could understand better. Now the Indians do not often go to our Church in Canada, because Indians do not understand Assyrian language. Some go to the Qurbana of the Orthodox Church or Mar Thoma Church or Catholic Church (Syro-Malabar) which conducts service in Malayalam. Our Church does not have enough people to arrange a priest from Kerala.

After Qurbana on Sunday I went to the house of Chinnan (Inasu) Mookan and Molly. Their son is studying medicine in Hungary. I hear several students from the USA and Canada go

to Hungary to study medicine. Then I went to the house of his younger brother Darmo Mookan. These brothers are my second cousins. Their grandfather Kunjuvareed (George) was the younger brother of my grandfather Kochouseph. Now the cousins are scattered all over India, England, USA, Canada, etc...

It was a big crowd. Being a Sunday they had some free time. Then I went to the house of Dr. Nishi Kurien and her husband Binoy. Nishi's maternal grandmother Kunjanam Mathunny Kizhakoodan was the bosom friend of my mother. I had known Nishi since she was small. I used to visit her in their home in Bangalore in 1964-66.

Sajan is the only son of Nishi and Binoy. He is about 5 years old. He is a very smart boy. He began to recite the Qurbana in Malayalam imitating his parish priest. I began to narrate the story of Joseph and showed the picture saying that the brothers of Joseph put him in a pit. He picked up my gesture and repeated it again and again with loud laughter.

The next day Binoy's father and mother came to see me. I had seen the mother during a previous visit. They have been working abroad for a long time. He was in the Indian Embassy in Germany. After retirement they settled down in Canada, as their children had settled down there. Many Indians talk of returning to India, but cannot act accordingly owing to their children.

The supper on Monday was in the house of Tony and Molly Emmatty. Tony is the nephew of my brother-in-law Dr. N.V. George. In Tony's home Bishop Michael John and his wife came for dinner. Bishop Michael John is a retired Bishop from Kerala belonging to the Church of South India (union of

Anglicans, Methodists, Congregationalists etc.).

Bishop Michael John recalled that when he came to preach in Trichur, I had showed him the bed where he had to sleep that night with an innocent remark that , “It was the same bed and mattress where Mar Abimalek Timotheus Metropolitan died on 30 April 1945”. Bishop Michael John jokingly commented, “I smelt death when Mar Aprem said it”.

Another couple who had joined me for supper in that house was Inasu and Aysha Nadakavukaren. Both their sons were studying medicine in Hungary, like second cousin, son of Chinnan Mookan. Chinnan’s mother Mary and Inasu Nadakavukaren’s mother Elsy are sisters.

After dinner I went to the house of Inasu and Aisha. That was the 6th house I was moving to with my bag and baggage in two days. We talked till late after midnight. The next day I was to return from Canada. We decided to end our conversation at about 2 after midnight.

Next morning at 9.a.m. I went to the airport to fly to Minneapolis. Dr. Nishi had wanted to come to the airport to see me off. She had to rush with her son Sajanmon just before the last call for boarding.

When I said goodbye to these good friends, the officer at the immigration had doubts about my passport. He took it in and came back to return it to me. when I enquired what was the problem he asked me whether I had added any sheet to my passport. I gave him the simple answer that they were the additional sheets fixed by the passport office in Cochin, India. I think they believe in some formula by which we are counted criminals and guilty until we prove innocent. Thank God the

law in most other countries are the opposite. We cannot be treated as criminals unless we are proved guilty.

I could not spend much time with the Assyrians in Canada. But during the three days in Toronto area I have done what was humanly possible. In Chicago and other places I had spent some time with the Assyrians, as there were not many Indians belonging to our church. There are plenty of Christians from Kerala living in Chicago. But they belong to other Churches. I didn't have a chance to visit any of those Kerala Churches.

IOWA

From Toronto I flew to Minneapolis, Minnesota. Polly Reuling who adopted Unny Mary and Alice were there to receive me. We went to the Macalaster College where Unny Mary was studying. Since it was her 21st birthday it was a happy surprise to the girl who was taken care of my mother in the Mar Timotheus Memorial Orphanage, Trichur. Unny Mary was the first girl adopted abroad from the Mar Timotheus Memorial Orphanage.

My mother Mrs. J.D.Mooken went to America to live with my brother and his family in 1980. She took advantage of the situation to visit Unny Mary. The little girl showed her house and said "my house". My mother was happy she had a good house to belong to, something not available to her in India. Polly Reuling took good care of Unny Mary and later adopted Alice also from the same Orphanage. She even came to teach in Kodaikanal, India to be in the country of her two adopted girls.

Polly Reuling promised to write several pages of her impressions of my mother in the book **Mother of the Motherless** which I was writing. The relationship between my mother and Polly Reuling was interesting. My mother knew no English and Polly never learned Malayalam. But they were sincere good friends. Polly has a great admiration for my mother and the way she led the Mar Timotheus Orphanage inmates in daily prayers and singing Christian songs.

The house of Polly Reuling is in Waterloo in the State of

Iowa. Last time Dr. Thomas Mulakkan from Trichur had met me in Waterloo. That was a pleasant surprise. I had taught him in the Sunday school. I knew that he had gone to live somewhere in New York. This time too he came to Polly' residence to have supper with me and Alice. It was nice to meet friends abroad. His uncle Fr.P.T.John was the priest who taught me Syriac language when I was only 14 years old.

Waterloo has a small airport. Polly Reuling had booked a flight ticket for me to return to the Patriarchate in Chicago. The previous time, that was after the Holy Synod in July 1997, Polly had driven me to Chicago. That was a long and hectic drive to make it to the airport where we almost missed the flight.

The airport was small. The aircraft was small. The flight was delayed. Nobody seemed to know the exact time of the arrival of our aircraft. It was announced that the flight would be late. Yet the reasons were not known to the staff. Passengers requested to meet the friends and relatives waiting to see them off. Somebody said that there was some sort of strike by the ground staff. Finally I was happy to see some signs of the arrival of the aircraft.

When I reached Chicago airport I was happy to be met by our Assyrian friends who took me to the Patriarchate. I told Deacon Dadhway that I wanted to meet Deacon Laurence Namato. But he was busier than I. Therefore I could not get the **Gama Universe** programme installed in my computer during this visit. Deacon Dadhway who was driving his car through the busy streets of Chicago took out his Mobile phone and dialed. He left a message for Deacon Laurence Namato to meet me the

next day before I return to India.

Next day 15 minutes before my departure from the Patriarchate to the O'Hare International Airport Deacon Laurence Namato was there. Without wasting time he immediately opened my laptop computer and installed the Assyrian programme known as **Gama Universe** . It is a very useful programme indeed. The speed with which he was installing the programme was amazing. He is certainly a computer wizard.

On May 7th 1999 I left the Patriarchate in Morton Grove, Illinois to fly from Chicago's O'Hare airport to Frankfurt in Germany thus ending an American trip of just three weeks.

BERLIN

Professor Rainer Voigt of the Freie University in Berlin and his enthusiastic assistant Dr. Ulrich Nieten arranged a very useful programme for me to give a public lecture at the department of Syriac and Arabic studies on Monday 10 May 1999. The Syrian Orthodox priest and some others were present as guests. I was happy to meet them because it is generally thought that the Syrian Orthodox members had enmity against the Assyrians as they had some prayers of anathema against their saints, Cyril of Alexandria and Severus of Antioch.

The new situation is different. In the Holy Synod of the Assyrian church held in Chicago in June 1997 it was decided to remove these anathemas from the prayer books. They would be omitted when the prayer books would be printed next. It is unfortunate that the reverse is not true. The Syrian Orthodox Church, the Coptic Church etc did not omit the anathemas against Nestorius, Patriarch of Constantinople commemorated by the Assyrian Church among the *malpane yavnaye* Greek Doctors.

Berlin had interest in the Assyrian Church in the early part of this century. In 1906 the Evangelical Association for the advancement of the Nestorian Church was founded in Berlin. They employed an Assyrian priest who had Lutheran training in Germany. There was an orphanage run by the German Orient Mission outside Urmiyah for the Nestorian refugees from the mountains for about ten years.

Fr. Dr. Baby Varghese, Professor of the Orthodox Theological Seminary, Kottayam was there with me all the time I spent in Berlin. On Tuesday he accompanied me and Professor Voigt and Dr. Nieten while going to see the East German side. In my only visit to Berlin in 1980 I had not seen the East German side of the wall. Now the wall has disappeared. A lot of tourists were there seeing the Bradenburg Gate, the Emperor's Palace, the Humbolt University, the Cathedral, the Goethe Institute and others. A lot of renovations were going on at the Parliament Building. Some expensive hotels are also there.

All government offices of the Federal administration were to be moved from Bonn to Berlin by July - August that year. Concerns were voiced by the Indian associations because it was going to cost them a lot to go to Berlin from Cologne, Bonn, Dusseldorf area, where most of the Indians from Kerala were living.

To get something done regarding their visa it was easy for them to go from Cologne to Bonn. Hence they have requested the government not to move the consular sections to Berlin. Even travel by train is expensive in Germany.

Many German citizens employed in the federal government are upset as they have to find accommodation in Berlin. But these difficulties are there every where. In India the capital city is in New Delhi. We from Kerala have to travel 2000 miles for important matters. By flight it costs Rs. 20,000, about US \$ 500, to and fro. It is terribly expensive. By train we can make this journey with Rs. 800, about US \$ 20. It is cheap. Then it takes four days to go and come back. Food and other expenses on the way will count in addition to the time involved. Many Indians have been demanding a bench of the Supreme Court of India

in Hyderabad or somewhere in South India so that one can get justice done in the Apex Court with less travel expense.

In this trip I saw many people busy talking over the cellular phone at the airport and in the streets. When people cross the streets at the "walk" sign they are busy using their cellular phone. I feel that they walk slowly talking over the phone. They do not notice the red light coming warning to stop crossing the road. If the pedestrians do not notice the change of colour on the signal, it can cause accidents on the roads.

Some people use cellular phones while driving. This also is dangerous when the driver's attention is diverted when he is immersed in conversation.

A greater danger is the warning about cancer that can be caused by cellular phone. "Microwave radiation may Cook Your Brain" is the observation of the Herald of Health magazine in July 1999. In it we read: p.4,

Across America, Australia and Scandinavia, scientists are beginning to uncover worrying evidence that microwave radiation from mobile phones could cause psychological damage especially to the brain. At least three studies, one of them by the School of Medicine and College of Engineering at the University of Washington in Seattle, America, have found proof that low-level microwave radiation could split the DNA molecules in the brains of live rats by as much as 50 percent; such splitting is associated with Alzheimer's disease, Parkinson's disease and cancer. Memory loss in another damaging effect.

It is good to listen to these warnings. Some researches speak of "increase in fatigue, headaches and skin irritation for

regular users”.

I wanted to get Euro currency exchange for US dollars upon arrival at Frankfurt Airport. But the Bank gave me only Deutsche Mark, the German money. I was told that although the Euro was launched on January 1, 1999 it is not in circulation. Actually the Euro currency in notes and coins will materialize only in 2002 A. D.

In addition to the nine Schengen States (Germany, France, Spain, Portugal, Italy, Belgium, Luxembourg, Holland and Austria) there are Finland and Ireland making a total of eleven countries which accept Euro currency. The EU countries which did not join the “Euro” group are Britain, Denmark, Sweden and Greece. The Euro is likely to stabilise as 1.12 rate to a US dollar. Some people expected Euro would be equal to a US dollar 1:1. I think it will be convenient to travellers. We will not have to check whether the exchange value given to us is correct or not.

In the same way the people of euroland when they go to America, they can give a hundred Euro and get a hundred US dollars. The Banks can save a lot of operational charges. I have a secret wish that one day when I go to America and give 100 Rupees I can claim 100 US dollars. This statement betrays my ignorance of money matters or international monetary dealings. In 1966 I had to pay only 4.75 Rupees to get a dollar. Now I have to pay 44 Rupees to get a dollar. An Indian is 10 times cheaper after 33 years.

Batuk Gathami writing from Brussels on August 3, 1999 thinks that Britain whose currency a Pound Sterling which is much higher in value than Euro and the US dollar (pound is about Rs.

67 while Euro is only Rs. 38), will finally join the Euro group.

The Hindu, Madras, August 4, 1999, says in p.16

“Britain is still a major question mark. But many Europeans are convinced that despite the British Prime Minister, Mr. Tony Blair’s waxing and waning against the background of domestic political realities about joining the European Monetary Union and the euro, Britain will get on board. Much will depend on the health of the British economy over the next few months.”

Helen Yaunansardaroud is the only member from the Assyrian Church who is studying in the Syriac and Arabic Department of the Freie University in Berlin. She came to my lecture. She was delighted to hear that I had visited once Urmiah in Iran in March 1998. She promised to attend my Assyrian Qurbana on May 16 at Lutherstadt Wittenburg. She came in the car of Prof. Voigt to attend the Qurbana along with Dr. Nieten. Helen’s father too had wanted to come. But he could not do so owing to ill-health.

Prof. Voigt had not known about the website of our Church. I told him about www.cired.org. The next Sunday when he came for Qurbana he had a file in his hand. It was the information he downloaded from our website www.cired.org. I am glad that this website is doing useful service to the people around the world. Unfortunately many people including the Assyrians do not know about this website. I have given enough publicity to this website through my talks and writings.

Assyrians are very few in Berlin. But West Syrian Orthodox immigrants use a Catholic Church there. Our Church members in Germany are mainly in Wiesbadan near Frankfurt.

WITTENBURG

Lutherstadt Wittenburg was the venue of the seminar on the Church in the Sassanian period arranged by the Martin Luther University of Halle/ Wittenberg. In addition to the usual Syriac scholars a nun from the Syrian Orthodox Church living in Germany was an added attraction.

Sister Hatune Dogan presented me a book captioned WORTERBUCH, i.e., from Syriac to German and from German to Syriac. This dictionary was published by my friend Mar Gregorius Yohanna Ibrahim. I smiled when I saw his name spelt as Mar and not Mor on the front cover of this book. Nowadays the Syrian Orthodox Church argues that 'Mar' should be pronounced as 'Mor'. I am glad that Mar Thoma (Saint Thomas) is always spelt in India as Mar Thoma and not Mor Thoma.

This book published in 1977 has two prefaces in German by Dr. Peter Bruns and the other by Professor Jurgen Tubach of Halle. The English foreword was written by my friend Prof. Andrew Palmer of London who had written foreword to my travelogue published last year ITALY, LIBAN & IRAN.

As the Assyrian liturgy is available in both German and Syriac languages, it is very useful in pronouncing most of the important words which are included in this book.

It was nicely printed in Syriac by Sidawi Printing House, Damascus. Hatune Dogan is a nun of the Syrian Orthodox Church in Germany.

The presence of this nun in the company of Syriac scholars was encouraging. She was the only nun in this conference on Syrian Christianity held in Wittenberg, Germany.

I read a paper in the conference about the liturgy of Mar Addai and Mari which is the speciality of the Assyrian Church of the East. Of course, the Catholic counterpart known as the Chaldean Church in Iraq shares the same patrimony as both these churches were one and the same till the sad split during the time of John Sulaqa in 1553 A.D.

Many scholars have heard about the liturgy of Mar Addai and Mar Mari. They have never witnessed any service conducted using this liturgy. Therefore the organizers had requested me to celebrate a Qurbana. I had taken my Patriarch's permission to celebrate a Holy Qurbana in Wittenburg at the conclusion of the Seminar. As we have to fast before the holy Qurbana I told the organizers to schedule the holy Qurbana for Sunday morning rather than Saturday evening.

Deacon Thomas from Kerala who was studying in Halle was deputed by Professor Tubach to be my helper and interpreter during the conference. He was trying to give running commentaries of the events and talks given in German. There were no official interpreters during this conference. Because there were not many participants like me who could not comprehend German. The usefulness of Deacon Thomas came handy when I was to take a print-out of my talk from my laptop. The cable I was carrying was not sufficient to get a print-out by connecting it to the printer in the office. I did not know enough how to copy the matter to a floppy. Deacon Thomas was smarter than I. He copied the matter to a new floppy. Then he made print-out from the big printer.

For Holy Qurbana we have to bake the holy bread fresh. Deacon Thomas explained to the staff there that we require an oven on Sunday morning to bake the holy bread. The staff did not understand why we should bake bread when it was easier to buy ready-made bread. Finally we found a place where we could bake the holy bread on the Sunday morning.

Where can we get incense for Qurbana ? The Lutheran Church does not have a censer. The delegates to the Seminar were kind enough to contact the local Catholic Church. They were ready to help. Preparations were completed.

On Sunday morning we reached the door of the Church where Martin Luther had nailed his 95 theses of the Reformation in 1517 AD. The door was locked. The delegates began to arrive. Fr. Jacob Thekkeparambil (Director of St.Ephrem's Ecumenical Research Institute, Kottayam), Fr.Baby Varghese of the Orthodox Seminary in Kottayam and other friends began to think about the possibility of entering this great historic church. It was 6.45 a.m. People began to come to witness the first historic event of the Holy Qurbana being celebrated in the Assyrian language.

We had to commence at 7 a.m. Some delegates had to catch their train or plane in the morning. Finally the man with the key of the Church arrived. We were relieved that we did not have to nail another notice on the door of the Reformation Church that the holy service in the language of Jesus stands cancelled as there was no key.

I felt inspired to preach in front of the tombs of two great Reformers, Martin Luther and Philip Melanchton. As a student of Church History I felt privileged to celebrate in front of these two great Reformers. They were hearing the language of Jesus

for the first time. They were familiar with the words such as *Thalitha koomi, Maran atha, Eli Eli lmana Sabbachtani*, etc.

The delegates told later that they were grateful. They had the opportunity to witness the liturgy of Addai and Mari. The Syrian Orthodox delegates such as Ramban Hanna Aydeen , Sister Hatune Dogan and others sang the Syrian Chants very beautifully. We had practised the previous night the responses they were to sing. Although the Syrian Orthodox Church under Patriarch Mar Zaka Iwas and the Assyrian Church under Patriarch Mar Dinkha IV do not have official relationship of full communion, since 1997 there is a dialogue committee appointed by these two heads for official bilateral dialogue between these sister churches.

DIEBURG, MUNICH AND BOHMTE

The Seminar in Wittenburg ended on Sunday May 16th after Qurbana. The delegates departed in different directions. I had planned to visit the children of the Mar Timotheus memorial orphanage in Trichur who were adopted in Germany. There was no time to look up their telephone numbers from my old diary when I left India for Chicago in a hurry.

Dieburg is a small place near Frankfurt. Nicola Chitra lives there with Ilse and Harald Grunzweig. Fortunately I got connected to Ilse Grunzweig over the phone. I understood that I would be welcome in their home in spite of my sudden notice. I had only one day to spare. Therefore I took a train from Wittenburg to Frankfurt with in a few hours.

On Monday 17th May the Grunzweigs took me back to Frankfurt. Before we left Mrs. Grunzweig checked with the Airlines about my return tickets from Frankfurt. The office in Frankfurt told us that my ticket was okay only upto Bahrain, but it was still on the waiting list from Bahrain to Trivandrum. Then I had to telephone to my travel agent in India to make sure that my return reservation was okay.

From Frankfurt I went to Munich. That was my fifth visit to that city. I was there in June 1977 for the first time. My Kerala friend Dr. P. C. Mathew took me to see the swimming pool of the 1976 Olympic Games in Munich.

In Munich I had no time to see places. I had two Roman

Catholic friends in Munich. One is Dr. Hubert Kaufhold. The second is Msgr. Lothar Waldmuller. I had met them in India as well as in my previous visit to Munich in 1997.

Mrs. Brigitte Huber is an ordained pastor in the Lutheran Church. She and her husband Paul adopted two children from the orphanage, Saritha and Thomas Aprem. Both were growing up. Mrs Huber was delighted to hear that I was scheduled to visit Venice in October. Mrs. Huber said that was going to be the 18th anniversary of these two Trichur children in their home in Grobenzelle near Munich. So I accepted the invitation to visit the Hubers again in October the same year when I would attend the Mixed Committee for Theological Dialogue in Venice.

From Munich I went by train to Bohmte. It was a long way. I had to change at Frankfurt. I could have taken a ticket upto Frankfurt and from there a Good Evening ticket upto Bohmte. In Germany train journey after 7.40 p.m. is cheap. In India nobody thought of such concession for night. In Germany they give concession for the night because passengers do not generally travel by night.

At Osnabruck railway station Dr. Pastor Karl Heinz Kuhlmann was waiting for me. He has been the Pastor of the Lutheran Church at Arenshorst near Bohmte. I stayed in his parsonage for a day. He is retired and spends his time in teaching. He was allowed to stay in the parsonage for some months as the new pastor was a "half pastor". That means you pay him half his salary. The pastor would hold services on alternate Sundays.

Such arrangement could save some money for small parishes which cannot afford full salary. At the same time it was

not an ideal arrangement. The Church looked deserted.

A group of believers from a neighbouring parish came to visit the Church. As the new "half pastor" was not available nobody opened the door of the Church. Dr. Kuhlmann opened the door and spent some time with the members of the sister congregation.

A golf course was being built around the Church. The patron of this Lutheran Church is a Roman Catholic. A peculiar situation. When the owner of the area sold his farm, he sold the Church too. The original owner was a Lutheran, but the man who bought all that property is a Roman Catholic.

Mr. Klaas, the present landlord is a nice man with ecumenical vision. He visited our Mar Timotheus Memorial orphanage in Trichur along with his wife when they accompanied Pastor Karl Kuhlmann and his wife to Kottayam and Trichur. They gave a handsome donation to the orphanage.

Mr. Klaas, manufacturer of agricultural equipments, was in hospital. Pastor Kuhlmann and I went to visit Mrs. Klaas as they were residing near the parsonage.

During my return from Arenshorst in the evening Pastor Kuhlmann told me that I could commence my train journey from Bohmte, instead of Osnabruck. I never knew that there was a railway station in Bohmte. That was why I requested Pastor Kuhlmann to meet me at Osnabruck. I returned from Bohmte and after half an hour I changed the train at Osnabruck and reached Frankfurt.

From Frankfurt main railway station I went to the airport by train. It is a convenient arrangement we miss in India. We

have to pay for the taxi in order to go to airports.

After considerable delay at the airport the aircraft arrived from Rome. It was a Paris-Rome-Frankfurt-Bahrain flight. While waiting for the delayed flight, Zachariah Kuruvilla and his wife Sara met me in the waiting area. They were coming from India and waiting for their connection to San Francisco. I was their guest in Fremont the previous October. They were in India in connection with the wedding of their daughter Archana.

On 20th May 1999 I reached Bahrain after my connecting flight to India had departed. The Gulf Air arranged for my stay in Bahrain and sent me to Doha the next day. From Bahrain I telephoned to Trichur to tell my church people of the delay of one day. Usually I never change my itinerary. Moreover I had agreed a programme in a Catholic Church on Friday, the day of my supposed arrival in Trichur.

Generally I have crowded programmes from the day of my arrival in India. Therefore I had to ask my Secretary to inform the Catholic Church about the delay in my arrival in Trichur. From Bahrain the Gulf Air flew to Doha as there was no direct flight to India the next day. From Doha they sent me by another flight to India. I reached Trichur on Saturday 22 May 1999.

TO ROME

On October 1st 1999 we reached the Cochin International Airport. We the people of Kerala are proud that we constructed such a large Airport. Objections and obstructions from people regarding the compensation to be paid for the land acquired for the construction of the airport were overruled by the court. It is closer to Trichur, my home town. I could have made it in one hour and five minutes. But the bridge on the way was under repair. Therefore we took an hour and a half.

Flight to Bombay, now known Mumbai, took a little more than one and a half hours. I was met at the airport by the representatives of the Anna Maria Travels who prepared supper for me and took me to the International Airport. Such services are not provided by most of the travel agents. There is tough competition among travel agencies. Such extra services provided fetch more customers.

At the airport I took the boarding pass and approached the customs officers with a request to write down in my passport that I was taking a laptop Toshiba computer. The officer standing next to me was telling another traveller that of late they did not do such service. They were not allowed to write anything in the passports. We could carry the purchase bill or the receipt of the customs duty paid at the time of the first entry into the country as evidence. I had not taken the receipt of the customs duty paid last November when I first brought it to the country. Any how another officer came to me, took my passport, entered

the number of the laptop and wished me a safe journey.

On 2nd October after midnight we left Mumbai airport. We were scheduled to depart at 2.30 a.m. But we were late by some minutes. The flight time was eight hours. I wrote these words at the Frankfurt airport where I was waiting for the connecting flight to Rome. Yes, my computer helped.

Meanwhile I glanced through the news paper of the day, Herald International Tribune. The front page news said that the American Scientists lost \$ 125 million as the spacecraft approached Mars the previous week, because of the confusion between miles and kilometers. "This is going to be the cautionary tale that is going to be embedded into the introduction to the metric system in elementary school and high school and college physics till the end of time". I have a better idea of the two systems. Make just one system. You save \$125 million next time.

From Frankfurt flight to Rome was full. Passengers came fully dressed in woolen clothes. But when we reached Rome an hour and a half later the weather was warm. Passengers took off their coats. I was happy because my overcoat was in my checked-in baggage for which I had to wait more than half an hour after arrival. Numerous flights had landed almost at the same time just before 12 noon. So it took a long time for my bag to show up. I was standing near the baggage claim area of the baggages arriving from the flights of Alitalia. Later when I asked other passengers they told me that the baggages from the Lufthansa flights were to show up at the opposite side. I should have looked at the monitor to see the location of the baggages. I had just stopped at the conveyer belt where the passengers in front of me had stopped. After we land in an

airport the passengers from the various flights merge. We cannot be sure that all the passengers who are walking in front of us or close behind us are the passengers who were with us in the same flight. The airport in Rome is much bigger than the airport in Cochin which was the starting point of my present trip. We say the Cochin International Airport is a big one. It is true from the point of view of Kerala. But in comparison to Rome it is tiny.

After I got my baggage I looked at signs for exit, green channel, customs etc. I stopped to declare that I have a computer because the customs official was looking at my computer. "Copier?" he asked. I didn't get it. I repeated computer laptop Toshiba. I think he did not understand what I was saying. Then I opened it. He told his colleague "copier". I kept quiet. I knew that copier is not a computer. But I did not argue. Let him see what it is. Then I said that I had come to attend a meeting. So he told his colleague "meeting". Then I showed the invitation from the Secretariat for Christian Unity signed by the secretary Bishop Walter Kasper. There it was written, "You will be the host of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity and of the Holy See". I know last time it was written, "You will be the guest". This time the word guest had changed into host. I know that this change does not alter my status except the fact that the Bishop who signed last time was a French speaking man and this time it was a German.

I was happy to get out. There were no immigration officials. As we were coming from Germany we had visa valid for Schengener States, which means Italy, Germany, France, Portugal, Spain, Belgium, Holland, Luxembourg, Austria and Greece. I wish other countries like Sweden, Denmark, Norway

ained this group. Things would then be easier for Indian travellers. We did not fill in the disembarkation card. It saves a lot of time at the arrival point. No paper work. Look at the passport if you want. If there is a valid visa, don't ask more questions. Let the tired traveller proceed to his destination unhindered. I think the trouble-makers are not the regular travellers. If you belong to a terrorist group, you do not take the trouble of applying for a visa. You find other clandestine methods of entering a country.

At the arrival area I expected some familiar face to wait for me. Usually the tired passengers would be happy and relieved when they reach this area after immigration and customs. Some passengers will be met by many friends and relatives at airports. I am not in favour of more than one or two people coming and crowding the airports for receiving passengers.

I looked for the deacon. Nobody showed up. Then I began to suspect that my last e-mail sent to Bishop Mar Bawai Soro had not reached him. When I realised that my e-mail had not come two days back, I had sent my secretary to a net centre in Erichur to send the message again.

He assured me that it was sent from the net center. I was counting on it. But nobody can be sure of it. Even now I do not know where that message went. I tried a telephone call. It was not going through. There were some instructions in the Italian language which I could not understand. I saw an American couple trying to contact their friends. I asked them whether I should dial 06 the code of Rome. The man asked me where I wanted to call. I showed the address and told them that it was to Rome. The man said "then you don't have to dial 06". The

wife said, "Yes, you should dial 06 first". The man said "No need to dial 06 as we were in Rome". It did not work without 06, because we were not in Rome. The airport is outside Rome. So we should dial 06. I record it here for the benefit of the travellers like me and the American friend. I hope by this time they have figured it out. Or, are they still standing in the airport arguing whether the wife had better practical wisdom or not!

My stay was arranged by Bishop Bawai Soro in the Beda Pontifical College near San Paulo. So I took a train to Rome Ostienza. I was met by our deacon from Iran, Benjamin Korosh whom I had met two years ago when I was in Rome for the same dialogue with Vatican. Beda means Big in Hindi language. But here it means St. Bede, a saint venerated by the Irish Catholics. There are students from many countries studying in this seminary. This year we have one more student from our Church, that is Father William Thoma whom I had met in Chicago when he was a deacon. He and deacon David Royel, who were students in the Mandelein Seminary near Chicago were ordained as priests on 23 may 99. They will be doing their higher studies and research in Rome. There are good libraries for theological students to do research at doctoral level in Rome. Of course the basic theological training would be given by our own churches at the seminaries in Bagdad or India. But we need more scholars from our church in every field of theological learning.

On Sunday 3rd October, I attended the Holy Mass at the Seminary Chapel. They too use incense. It was the English translation of the Latin Mass. It appeared very much like the Anglican Mass which I used to attend during my studies in Warminster, Wiltshire. But the Anglicans did not have incense. Perhaps they have it in the high church mass.

The Rector of the St. Beda Pontifical College was leading the Holy Mass. It was the first service after the three month annual vacation. The Rector has a strange name. His name is 'Strange'. I suppose that was the name given to him during baptism. Or, is it a name given to him at the time of ordination? First I thought that it was a nickname. Usually the seminarians confer strange names to their beloved teachers.

Anyhow we did not feel much embarrassed at the strange name of Fr. Strange. He is usually referred to as Fr. Rector. Just now my computer made a mistake as I typed his name. It typed Fr. Stranger. I do not dare to try spell check on this para. The computer may ask more strange questions as it may not have a strange name as Fr. Strange in its memory. Last time when I typed Bishop Aprim, the computer asked, "Is it Bishop April or Bishop Apron?" The computer's brain depends upon our brain or what we supply to its memory to store.

The sermon of the rector during the mass was short and appropriate. What is the keystone of our Christian calling? Money? sex? popularity? He recalled what a Bishop had told him, "Unfortunately, I have ordained some who had come to serve the church to make sure of a meal ticket for the rest of their life". He challenged us that we should make sure that our keystone of Christian calling must be solid faith. The sermon was brief, less than ten minutes. I preach for 15 minutes usually and instruct my clergy not to preach for more than 15 minutes. Today I felt, "may be ten minutes would be enough for me too". Since our mass takes one and a half hours without the sermon it may be better to restrict it to ten minutes. The whole service was over in 57 minutes.

On Monday Oct. 4, I went to the Pontifical Oriental Institute which is the best place to read books related to the Oriental Churches. At the reception desk I asked for the Professor of Canon Law Fr. George Nedungatt S.J. who is known to me at least from the year 1983 when we attended the Oriental Canon Law conference in Freiburg, Germany. It is natural that the people from Kerala make instant friendship between each other when they meet in an international conference. It is also nice to talk to each other in one's own mother tongue. He had visited me in my palace in Trichur. I visited him when I had gone to Rome last time. That was two years ago when I went there for the same dialogue.

This time I had a special purpose in meeting him. I wanted him to introduce me to the library. I did not know the formalities to be gone through for permission to read in their famous library for a week. I came this time to read in that library for at least one week. We bishops say that we are too busy to have time to read in the libraries. We do read newspapers. We also read letters and even pamphlets anonymous or with names. Some of these pamphlets tell us something to mend our ways. There may be occasional letters of encouragement.

Fr. Nedungatt was happy that I decided to find some time for reading. He suggested that all bishops should go the same way. Find extra days to do some serious reading when you get an opportunity to travel. It helps to update your knowledge. It is not always possible to buy all books. But good libraries have them. This is a sort of vacation to some, away from the daily routine of administration. Some Bishops are assessed by the people on the basis of the money he is able to raise for the institutions he can establish in his diocese. Money is necessary.

Yet I feel that we bishops should keep up the reading habits we had cultivated while we were seminarians or young teachers in the seminaries. I said young because when we were in the seminary we used to comment on the performance of our senior professors that they did not come prepared. They came to the classes with old torn pages of notes they had noted down when they were students or they had prepared in the early years of their teaching career. We have to struggle hard to be upto date.

My main task was to complete the dissertation for my second doctorate. I know most people are satisfied with one doctorate. Some others want a second or third doctorate, but do not want to take the trouble of writing another thesis. They wait for honorary doctorates. Some are fond of acquiring several doctorates. The Germans do a second doctorate. When I found Dr. Dr. in the letterhead of my German friend I suspected that it was a printer's devil. But I was wrong. He had spent long hours, three years or so, to take that doctorate. It is not vanity. It is the way professors are recognized in Germany. In India it is not a custom. To work for a second doctorate most scholars find no time. I do not think that I have plenty of time. But my thirst for knowledge makes me write more and more. Instead of watching a TV or a movie I indulge in reading a new book or writing a new one. I miss the conversation over a cup often when friends or theologians meet. My first love is reading and writing and all other things are secondary or of low priority.

I was taken to the library. I was shown how to look for a book in the computer. I am not used to computerised cataloguing. I was familiar with the old card system. They still have the card system for older generation like me. When Fr. Nedungatt demonstrated how to look for a book or an author,

he showed me how I could check my books in their library. I was happy that some of my books were there. That means some scholars have already looked into my books. I have seen my books mentioned in the bibliographies of some scholarly works. Some scholars have acknowledged in their doctoral dissertations the services I have rendered to them in answering their enquiries or supplying them with Xerox copies from the manuscripts available in Trichur.

When I started searching for books I found it was not easy. The librarian realized my predicament and came and started doing it for me after typing the words Nestorian. We made a search for all books with this name. Then he asked me to scroll so that I could see each book related to the subject Nestorian. It was useful. I found many books. The Librarian showed me the books of *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* and the *Orientalia Christiana Analecta* series. I took the book of *Symposium Syriacum* of 1984 and showed him the article I had written on Qanona, Qushapa and G'hantha in the liturgy of Addai and Mari. That was the Paper I presented in the *Symposium Syriacum* held in Groningen; Holland in 1984.

I started reading some books for my thesis. I saw Bishop Mar Bawai of our church who is doing a doctorate in *Anjelicum* in Rome. There are many theological universities in Rome. Gregorian university, Oriental Institute and *Anjelicum* are the three universities where the Kerala Catholic Scholars go for their doctorate, if they decided to do it in Rome. There are other universities in Rome with which I am not familiar.

Many Kerala scholars go to do doctorate in places other than Rome. They take their doctorate from Louvain University

in Belgium, Paris, Berlin, Munich, Vienna and also in England and USA. They go where scholarships are available with in reach as also contacts. Some people go to places of their choice whether finance is easily available or not. Church or mission funds are at hand.

I do not know how many pay from their pockets to learn theology. If I borrow money to become a doctor or a computer engineer, I will be able to pay it back. What financial benefit is there in learning theology? I do not know the answer. Things may change when people start reading books in theology and theologians are paid like doctors and engineers. Nobody knows how this crazy world changes its priorities!

On Tuesday 5th October when I came to the library again, two priests from Kerala doing doctorate in Rome met me. I usually enjoy talking. But I decided to concentrate on my reading. I find many useful books and magazines. Some of them are very useful for my thesis. But some are not directly related to the thesis. Still I take some notes because they are useful. It is not easy to get an entry into such libraries. Moreover the atmosphere was conducive to reading and writing.

The previous day the battery of my computer was completely spent and I had no adapter to plug in. So I continued to use paper and pen. But I was happy to notice that plug points were available on all tables in the reading room where we were working. So I decided to bring the adapter the next day and use the current direct instead of charging the battery. It gives less strain to my hands to use the computer rather than writing with hand which had often been over-used.

On Wednesday 6th October, I was back in the library. On

the way I felt that I should telephone home to inform that I had arrived safe and I was doing well. Usually I do not take the trouble to do it. But I know that it can cause a lot of heartburn to the staff at the Metropolitan's Palace in Trichur when people enquire about my whereabouts. I do not know how they really answer curious enquirers. If they tell the truth, most people will not believe. Anyhow I telephoned. I got connection in no time. Within a few minutes my phone card which I bought for ten thousand lire (about Rs.250) showed in the meter that it was going to be 00. So I told my deacon I am going to hang up.

Then I thought I could send a Fax with more details. I asked the policeman in the TERMINI railway station where the place to send a Fax was. In India it was seen in many places. The policeman did not know and directed me to enquire at the Information Counter. I could not easily find the information as repairs and renovations were going on at the railway station. Finally another policeman was able to tell me that there was a post office at the end of the road. When I reached there I copied one page news and gave it at the counter No.1 where it was written Telegram and Fax.

The person at counter No.1 told me that small post offices can send Fax to Europe only. If I need to send Fax to India I have to go to the Central Post Office. That was far. Although I had a pass for one week, I did not search for the Central Post Office. I was surprised that such facilities were not available anywhere near a central railway station. People in Rome use telephones more than Fax, or many people have their own arrangements through their computers. Now e-mail is very common. From computers one can send not only e-mail but also fax. Although I had my computer at hand and connection

to modem, I couldn't send fax or e-mail as I was not carrying a telephone. I do not know whether fax and e-mail can be sent from computers if one has a mobile phone. May be. Otherwise they would invent one.

On Wednesday I had lunch with the Rector and Professors of the Oriental Institute. Fr. George Nedungatt invited me and introduced me to the professors. The last time I was invited for lunch at the Oriental Institute was in May 1985 when my friend Fr. E.R.Hambye S.J who was teaching Church History there had invited me. I read through many books. I was curious to know whether the Voice of the East was displayed among the periodicals. But I could not find. I understand that they cannot display all the periodicals they receive from the four corners of the world. In their list of periodicals the Voice From the East published from Chicago should have been there, because it is a more attractive magazine of our Church. Although the Voice From the East is not seen, the Bet Nahrain magazine published from California is kept on display in the shelves for the periodicals.

A lot of topics of interest are available today. There is no space to give at least a summary of the books and periodicals I read. My desire is that our educated people should read and research whenever they get an opportunity to do so.

On Saturday 9th October 99 I was winding up my reading at the Oriental Institute library. Being Saturday they close at 12'o clock instead of 6 p.m. as usual. My one week of intensive study was over. I had to read more. I hoped that I would be able to find some of the books in the St. Ephrem's Library. The other possibility was to take photocopies of some material and

to read them later in Trichur or in the train as I was typing this part of the travelogue. Sometimes you get the mood to type some matter like this if it is in your memory. If you do not need to give reference to page numbers etc.... If you need serious writing it is not possible during a train journey.

There are people reading in the train. You can have light reading or serious reading in the train. There are others who do engage themselves in conversation. There are a lot of passengers who neither read nor write. They day dream or sleep or waste time. What else can we do when we are in the train. Some can go to the snack bar in the trains. Anyhow all depend upon the taste of the traveller.

On Saturday afternoon as there is no library, I decided to go to see St. Peters Basilica. I had seen the news that the renovation of this the biggest cathedral was over and visitors were welcome to see. When I was here two years ago some portions of this beautiful basilica was under repair. I had seen this Basilica several times, at least in 1962, 1985 and 1997. Therefore I went fast, rather quickly. It takes at least a couple of hours to listen to the commentaries given by the Tourist guides. There will be always tourist groups from different nationalities in the Basilica. Because of the crowds, each group is asked to move fast. Some body like me, can stand near an English tourist and listen to what he had to say in English. Since I have seen it before and heard it before and even written a book about my tour of 1985 it was easy and therefore unnecessary for me to spend more time.

“Here comes the President of Cuba, Fidel Castro” shouted three young people as they saw me. Sometime ago there was a

photo of Pope John Paul II meeting Fidel Castro. I noticed in that picture that Fidel Castro's beard had started graying. I think his beard is whiter than mine. He is a taller and larger sized man than I. Yet because of my beard these people compared me to Castro. I know Bishop Poulouse Mar Poulouse had asked for an appointment with Fidel Castro when the Bishop was visiting Latin America. But the dates did not suit. So the Bishop could not have an occasion to meet him. Later when the lady ambassador of Cuba to India visited Trichur there was a reception and Bishop Poulouse spoke on the occasion.

In 1977 when I was in the railway station of Wurzburg in Germany some people asked me, "Are you the President?" I could not guess what was in their mind. I said, "Yes, I am the President of the Church History Association of India". They said, "No, President Idi Amin?" I did not say 'Amen' to their joke. That was the time the newspapers had reported that Idi Amin had left Uganda to attend the Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Conference and he had not shown up in London. There was protest against his inhuman policies.

There were rumors that his plane had landed somewhere in Europe. That was why the young people could play a joke at the expense of my beard. Although we had beard in common, he was a fat man. So I told my questioners that Idi Amin was big, really big and did not look like me.

Monsignor Antony Chirayath hails from my hometown Trichur. He had been working in Rome for the past 28 years. When I went on pilgrimage to Rome in 1985 the Catholic priest in our tour group went to see Msgr. Chirayath. This time I decided to say "hello" to him.

When I telephoned to him he invited me for a vegetarian lunch near the Oriental Institute in Rome where I was reading.

After the lunch he drove me to a new Church built in the suburb of Rome. It is a huge Church, but mostly underground. He introduced me to the priest from Kerala working near that Church. That was the place where ten million young people are expected to gather in August 2000 in a Millennium Youth Conference. Pope John Paul II who completed 80 years of age on 18th May is expected to addresss this youth gathering.

One priest showed us the print-out of the results of the Parliamentary election in Kerala held just before I had left India. We discussed politics over a cup of tea in Malayalam, our mother tongue.

On Saturday evening I was sitting with my two Assyrian friends Rev. William Thoma and Deacon Chorosh Benjamin. Alexander from the Syrian Orthodox Church in Beirut was also at the same table. Then I met a fourth Assyrian, Chaldean to be exact. Hormizd is from Urmia. I told him that I had met his Metropolitan Mar Thoma Meram in March 1998 when I visited that ancient town of Christianity where one of the three wise men (magi) was buried.

I am happy that more people from the country of Iran are coming forward for service to the Church, because last year when I was in Iran I heard that both Urumia and Teheran did not have enough people coming forward for priesthood. The Chaldeans as well as the Assyrians are experiencing this difficulty. When I visited Iran I heard that their senior Metropolitan in Teheran Mar Yohannan Issaye who was over 85 years had passed away on 7 February 1999. Since there was already a Metropolitan,

Mar Ramze Garmo, there was no problem of leadership. I also heard about the death of Mar Gevarghese Garmo, Archbishop of Mosul on 9-9-1999. He had come to see me when I had visited Mosul in March 1990.

In our Assyrian Church after the Bishop of Iran Mar Khannania Dinkha was elevated to the rank of Patriarch on 17 October 1976m there was no Bishop. The Patriarch continued there for some time. Even now the Patriarch visits Teheran. Last year he ordained clergy etc. Getting suitable clergy from the country to become bishops there, is a must. It is not easy for foreigners to go and work there as leaders of Christian religion.

It is true of India. Foreigners are not given visa to preach or even to give a short talk. To get visa to attend a Christian conference is also difficult. But Bishops can come as tourists. India likes money from the foreigners. But government is becoming increasingly vigilant to see that these tourist Christians do not hold public preaching or run institutions. Mother Theresa was given citizenship in India, because she came to work in India before India became independent. My predecessor Mar Thoma Darmo had difficulty in getting citizenship in India even after working there for more than 16 years. When he died on 7th Sept., 1969 at Bagdad he was stateless. India government had given him an Identity Pass to travel to Iraq, but it was written 'stateless' in that Identity Pass.

Pope John Paul II beatified 10 religious figures on March 7, 1999 at Vatican. This is a record in the number of saintly persons made by a single Pope in the last three centuries. The total number of the blessed people chosen by the present Pope is 805.

In a total of 114 ceremonies, John Paul II has thus beatified more than half of the 1,611 total proclaimed by the Church since the process was codified in 1605. The eight Spanish priests and monks who were shot in Motril, near Grenada, Southern Spain, included Fr. Vincente Soler, who witnesses say converted a communist and offered to be killed in place of a father of eight children.

“They were simple men, far from political intrigues, dedicated to their ministry, and concerned only with religious perfection and saving souls,” their official biography said.

The German woman was Anna Schaffer, who was handicapped by an accident at the age of 19, and who died 14 years later in Mindelstetten, southern Germany.

During this trip I had an occasion to visit Bishop Mar Bawai Soro in the Seminary where he was staying to do his doctoral studies in Anjelicum. He was planning to finish his studies in Rome by June 2000 and to return to his diocese in California around San Jose. He took me out for supper.

C H A P T E R 8

TO VENTIMIGLIA AND VENICE

On Sunday 10th October Deacon Benjamin Korosh took me to the railway Rome Ostienzia station from the Beda Pontifical College near San Paulo Basilica. I was able to catch the train going to Torino at 7.18 a.m. I had to get down at Genoa PP at 11.50 a.m. If I forget to get down there my train will go to Torino and I will miss my connection to Ventimiglia. I have some difficulty with language because other passengers do not know English. I ask in English and they reply in Italian. That is the only way I can communicate with them until I learn Italian or they learn English.

I recalled the free classes and free time I had in 1961 October in the ship of Lloyd Triestino when I had sailed from Bombay to Genoa on my way to England. For two weeks they have free classes in Italian for the passengers who cared to study. It was 38 years ago. But in the ship I did not attend the Italian classes because I never thought that I would go to Italy to stay or travel. Had I learned for two weeks, 38 years ago it would have been easier for me to communicate with the Italians. Yes, the train is reaching Genoa P.P. station. I must close my laptop and put it in my suitcase.

When I reached Genoa PP railway station I had to catch the train for Ventimiglia. It was on another platform. I found it difficult to climb down the stairs with the luggage. Still more difficult it would be to climb up the stairs. So I went without baggage to make sure of the platform before I would carry my

heavy baggage. Fortunately, after I found out the platform I noticed that some passengers were crossing the railway track with their baggage. Actually they had two places on the platform where we could walk over easily with our baggage. In India that is not possible. Some people trespass. It is too risky. So when we have heavy baggage we hire a porter. Then we climb the overbridge. Here there are no overbridges. There are no porters too. So the passengers have to carry their own baggage. Therefore the railway authorities make a ramp along which we carry or pull our baggage. Of course we have to look and see whether any train is coming at that time.

When I reached the Ventimiglia station I was happy to meet my friend Alberto Arisi and his wife Floviana waiting for me. I was happy to meet their daughter born after I had met them two years back. We talked about our Church. He started to ask a lot of questions about our Church and its future. He reads the Voice of the East magazine regularly and keeps the news of our Church up to date.

On Monday 11th October I started my journey to Venice by train. When I reached Milan it was about 4.p.m. The direct train to Venice St. Lucia station had been cancelled. There was another train in that direction, but there would be a diversion after the main station in Venice. Anyhow I telephoned to the Casa Cardinal Piazza to inform that my arrival in Venice will be at 7.55 p.m instead of 7.p.m as informed earlier. This time the sister who took the telephone was kind enough to call a man who could speak English. He told me that a sister would be at the station to meet me.

When I reached the Venice Metro station I got out and waited for the shuttle train to Venice St. Lucia station. I managed

find the train. Finally at around 8.25 p.m my train reached the destination and I got out. Fortunately I was able to find a trolley on the platform and I could put my baggage on the cart and push.

When I got outside I was looking for a nun from Kerala. But an old Italian nun was standing there with my name on a piece of paper. I was happy that I have somebody to direct me to the conference centre. It was not a nun from Kerala. I hoped to speak in my mother tongue Malayalam because I have heard that nuns from Kerala were found in many convents in Italy and Germany.

It is strange that there was not a single nun from Kerala in this Centre. The nun who came from the Centre did not know much English either. I did not know a single word of Italian. Still I had no problem to reach the destination. She had already bought tickets for us for the boat. After the boat journey there was a walk for five minutes. The nun offered to carry my big bag weighing 18 kilos. I knew that she would not be able to carry it. So I gave her my briefcase which weighed 5 kilos. My computer was in it.

With much difficulty I managed to reach the destination. The sister had to stop twice with my briefcase. The nun is older and weaker than I am. I do not know what I would have done if alone. I had never walked with an 18 kilo bag for five minutes. It is always wiser to travel light. It is good that some airlines have restricted the baggage allowance to 20 kgs. Otherwise travel will be miserable for travellers.

On Tuesday 12th October we started the sessions of our Mixed Committee for Theological Dialogue. All our members

were present, except Fr. Johan Bonny who works as secretary in the Pontifical Commission for Christian Unity. As his father had passed away that day he had gone home to Belgium. We missed him. Another member we missed was Bishop Pierre Duprey who retired from the Pontifical Commission for Christian Unity in Rome. He was in that office from the very beginning. He was well versed in the affairs of the Eastern Churches. In the previous years he had guided us properly.

Bishop William Kasper is the successor of Bishop Duprey. He was Bishop of Stuttgart in Germany. He had experience with the Lutherans. The Eastern Churches may be a new experience to him. But he is well versed with the issues in our dialogue with Vatican. Of course the Catholic church is a large church of one billion members. Therefore it is not difficult to find suitable replacements.

Since we already had a draft with us our task was to go through the draft and make the necessary changes. It was the continuation of our study on Sacramental life. We supplied more information and Biblical quotations so that new readers would understand the documents. We had to make sure that it was not liable to misinterpretation, as they were going to be documents presented to the authorities of the Assyrian Church and the Vatican.

Venice

I was happy to visit Venice in Italy. Marco Polo (1254-1324 AD) the Italian merchant was a traveller. He came from Venice. The book of Marco Polo written in the 14th century tells about his visit to Kerala also. Thus this travelogue is informative to scholars.

Another cause of my interest was that the Coptic Orthodox Cultural Centre in Venice had given me a Medal of Merit in recognition of my ecumenical achievements. Some Copts are not happy with our church because we honour Nestorius. The followers of Cyril of Alexandria consider him as an arch enemy. The people who gave me the Medal of Merit perhaps did not know that I am a 'Nestorian'.

William Shakespeare's "Merchant of Venice" is well known to all students in the countries once ruled by the British. I do not know whether the students in America pay that much attention to Shakespeare as part of the British Raj once.

Aleppey (now written as Alappuzha) is a town with waterways criss-crossing. It has an harbour with a lot of merchandise. Hence Aleppey is called the Venice of the East.

Venice in Italy is the first city to be bombed from the air before aeroplanes were made. In 1849, the Austrians sent pilotless hot-air balloons fitted with bombs which were triggered by time-fuses. It was 150 years ago. Since then how many times the cities of the world have been bombed! No computer can calculate the number of bombs made by men and used by men to destroy human beings.

Although I was the head of the Assyrian delegation and co-Chairman with Bishop William Kasper I did not have much burden. The co convener representing our Church is Bishop Mar Bawai Soro. He is well experienced in this field. For the past 15 years he had been involved in various dialogues of our Church. He is known in Rome as he had been studying there for 5 years. He earned his Licentiate in Rome on his Paper on Theodore of Mopsuestia.

He hopes to complete his doctoral dissertation by June 2000 AD. He is also Bishop of Seattle, Washington with the parishes of Sacramento, San Francisco and San Jose in northern California. He worked as an office assistant in our Mixed committee typing the draft. He is our computer wizard.

On Wednesday 13th October the Patriarch of Venice, Marko Cardinal Ce, Arch Bishop of Venice came for lunch with us. He is a very friendly person who met each one of us personally. I sat next to him at the dining table. He could not speak English and I could not understand Italian. After he made a speech welcoming us I was asked to respond. The co-Chairman of Our Mixed Committee for Theological Dialogue could do it in Italian. But he suggested that it would be good if I did it, being a non- Catholic.

I was happy to do it. Dr. Joan Patricia Back from, Centro 'Uno' Ecumenical Centre of the Focolare Movement in Rome interpreted both the speech of the Patriarch and my response. In my response I told that I was very happy to be there in Venice because Marco Polo had come from Venice to my state of Kerala.

I do not write about the Focolare Centre, because in my travelogue entitled To U.K via USA, I had mentioned about the Focolare movement started in Italy. We had our Dialogue of 1998 in the Focolare Centre near London, England. I was very much impressed by the life of the founders of Focolare Movement, Chiara Lubich who was awarded the Templeton Award in 1979. What a better world our planet earth would be if we had more persons like Chiara Lubich.

The Mennonite Church had their second theological dialogue with the Vatican in the same way as we had in the

previous year. Actually they had a larger group. We could meet them in the dining hall and in the lobby. I was happy to talk with Joan Patricia Back, Irene from California, a Catholic friend from Kenya working in Rome and others. We did not have much free time to interact with each other.

On 13th afternoon we were taken to the Basilica of St. Mark. A very interesting place. A priest explained to us the details. Although there were a lot of tourists in the Basilica they cordoned off some area and supplied us with earphones which amplified what the priest explained and what our friend Joan Back interpreted in English. It has an interesting story.

In 820 AD when Islam began to grow in Alexandria the Church was afraid that the conquerors would desecrate the body of St. Mark, one of the four Gospel writers, who was buried in Alexandria. Therefore two merchants from Venice were requested to carry the body to Venice. They put the body in a large basket and covered it with pig's meat. When the Muslims opened this they let it be shut as they did not like pork. So they could not prevent the smuggling of the mortal remains of St. Mark out of Egypt.

This basilica is famous for its mosaics. 8000 meters of mosaic is there. Thin gold leaves are placed in between two glass panels and baked in kilns and it becomes a beautiful golden mosaic. Creation story and many other biblical stories are depicted through these mosaics. A lot of tourists visit this basilica.

On Thursday 14th October we concluded our discussion with the hope to meet in Florence next October. I agreed to prepare and read a paper on the Three Chapter controversy of the Second Council of Constantinople. It is difficult to get time

to write a scholarly paper which has to be presented to the scrutiny of scholars. Yet I took it as a challenge, as it would help me to read the latest books and articles on the subject. It is not easy like writing a travelogue like this. Even for travelogues I have to check some details and dates. Then only my books will be useful to scholars who occasionally quote me.

On Friday 15th October we said good-bye to the Centre of Cardinale de Piazza where we were meeting. Food was good. The sisters there were willing to serve us although they did not know English. As I do not eat meat the kitchen staff were careful to provide me with fish and cheese. I have eaten a lot of cheese. Therefore I will have to check my cholesterol level soon. I do not take any medicine for controlling or reducing cholesterol. My excuse is that my cholesterol level will not go up as I do not eat meat. But too much cheese can do harm.

Msgr. John Mutiso Mbinda from Kenya works in the Secretariat of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity. He was there to participate not in our dialogue, but in the dialogue with the Mennonites. He expressed a desire to buy my joke books. As I was leaving he told me that he was reading and laughing in sleep the previous night. I am sure that my name as a joker will spread in some Vatican circles. Personal friendship is also one of the advantages of such gatherings.

At 9.a.m. on Friday 15th October five of the ten delegates got into a boat and sailed straight to the airport. All five of us headed in different directions, Bishop Bawai to Rome, Msgr. Vellanickel to Milano, Msgr. Jammo to Amsterdam, Bishop Boustros somewhere else and to Frankfurt. It was good that we

ould travel in a taxi boat. If we were to return in the same way I came, it would be difficult to walk with the baggage to the bus stop or to the vaporette (water taxi boat), and go by bus to the airport.

It would cost about 60 American dollars for a direct taxi boat. It is big expense if it is for one person. Since it was for five persons it will be justifiable at \$ 12 for each. With a big baggage I do not enjoy travel. I am not young like in 1961 when I took my first foreign travel to study in England. Old people can travel if there are people to meet at all points. At 70 I cannot claim to be in the company of the old. Yet travel and carrying bags make me think that I should not carry my computer also.

I am typing out this matter as the flight is delayed. I do not waste time. I make use of the time of such unexpected delays. As the weather is getting colder there is always the possibility of delays in flights more often. The passengers should not grumble about it. The pilots cannot see properly. In low visibility it is advisable to wait, lest there be more accidents.

Some are big airlines, some are not. It will be good if there is a merger of these airlines or some alliance. They can avoid competition. Instead of two different airlines going in the same direction somewhat at the same time, if they merge the seats will be full and therefore profitable. With only a few passengers they run into loss. Or they increase the rate and the passenger will be the loser.

My flight was to take off at 10.30. a.m. When I got my boarding pass I was told that there would be a delay of half an hour. Now about forty minutes are over. Still I am not sure

that we are going to fly soon. If the time shown in the monitor in front of me can be relied on we will board the aircraft within a few minutes.

I feel sorry for the Assyrians who will be waiting in Frankfurt for me. Perhaps they will be rushing from their work to meet me and when they have to wait for more than one hour it looks bad. I was telling the archdeacon that it would be okay with me to take a train to the city railway station, then to Wiesbaden where the Assyrians live. But he said that it would be better if the Assyrians met me at the airport as I had the luggage. Yes, it is convenient for me. But it is very inconvenient for the people who come to meet me.

The airport was comparatively quiet. Some passengers were reading quietly some books or newspapers. Even those who were engaged in conversation were doing it quietly. Some people do not like to sit for long. They got up and walked giving exercise to their legs. There are a few children, restless. As I look around I am the only passenger seriously working on the computer. I do it because I know that I do not get enough time when I reach home to write down this travelogue. Hence it takes about ten months to publish a travelogue. As my friends would like to read as soon as the trip is over, I think the best way is to write while you travel. It is my hope that this travelogue will be published before the end of December.

Yes, the passengers started getting up from their seats and queuing up to enter the bus going to the aircraft. So I closed my computer and join the queue. There is no need to be in front of the queue. It is better to sit until half of the passengers depart. Then I can go without standing in the queue. Everybody should

not think that way. Some people should rush, so that others can go without rushing or pushing. The aircraft will not take off without all the passengers to whom the boarding passes are issued at the counter are in. So the first thing is to take the boarding pass as soon as the counter is open. Then we can write books or letters or go to W.C. The boarding pass in our pocket is a guarantee that the flight will not take off without us.

It is a good opportunity to make friends with other passengers if we know the language and if the passengers are in a mood to strike a conversation with me. Otherwise it will be boring to them as well as to me. Usually I do not make many friends during the transit in the airports. If the passenger looks like an Indian I might say hello to him and find out from where he was coming. If the first response is not friendly, then I will not disturb him. We should not disturb passengers who do not like to be disturbed. Some people become a nuisance during the journey. God should give us wisdom to discern things and behave.

It is 11.40.a.m. Still no hope of boarding the flight. Some passengers already in the queue are getting tired. Some people got into the bus taking the passengers to the aircraft. Then I too joined the queue. One German or Italian passenger who was worried about the delay of the flight looked at me and remarked: "We expect a miracle from you". I did not understand what he had said. Realising that, his friend translated it into English. So I smiled. I suppose what he meant was that this aircraft was already delayed. It would reach the destination in me only if I performed a miracle.

The flight was a short one. But it gave a lot of

inconvenience to the passengers, as they did not give proper advice that the passengers seated in the rear rows should enter the aircraft through the rear ladder. The passengers in row 35 entered the aircraft through the front entrance, as there was no ladder when they arrived near the aircraft. Then when we who were in row no 11 (the first row in the economy class) were about to enter the aircraft, we were asked to enter through the rear entrance to avoid crowding at the front entrance. When we reached inside the aircraft it was difficult for me to reach row no.11 as passengers to rows 34 and 35, the last rows in the aircraft, were rushing to their seats. As there is not enough space inside the aircraft for passengers to move back and forth, it is absolutely necessary to instruct that the passengers from rows upto 18 should enter through the front door and entrance to rows 18 to 35 should be through the back door, if there is a ladder.

When we reached the airport in Frankfurt some passengers were worried as their connecting flights were about to leave. The aircraft had to park away from the main terminal. We would have to wait a long time to get clearance from the airport authorities to taxi the aircraft near the terminal building. In such a case we can walk or run and get the connections. We were informed that a bus would take us to the terminal as it would be a long walk, if we attempt to walk quick or run fast to make it to the aircraft.

ASSYRIANS IN GERMANY

When I got out I saw nobody waiting for me. There were Assyrians waiting for me. But we did not see each other. I tried to call Wiesbadan to tell them that I would take a train to Wiesbadan and they could meet me there. I wanted to avoid trouble to them as they may be working day time on Friday. My personal advice to my readers is to arrive at a destination in the afternoon or evening, after 6.p.m. if there is a flight or train at that time.

Within a few minutes Mr. David Yacob came to me. Later Mr.Sankhiras Sayad and Archdeacon Pithyou Pithyou came. I was seeing the Archdeacon for the first time. I had heard about him some years back when I was at the house of Mr. Eshaya Chemmani in Ealing, England. Archdeacon Pithyou is an interesting person in the sense he is both Dec 25th and Jan 7th. We need such co-operation in scattered communities where the believers cannot afford the luxury of two priests. We should become one. If there is delay for the desired unity to take place we should always co-exist. It is important for the survival of this much persecuted Church.

Assyrian hospitality is always warm. I was taken to the house of David Yacoub for a good Assyrian dinner. I made friends with their two children, Glenn-Mary and Josef. I practised the Gospel for the following Sunday from the modern Assyrian Bible, as I made it a point to read from the modern Assyrian rather than the old Aramaic which most Assyrians do not understand. I was

taken to the place of my stay, a very comfortable place. I am typing these pages on my computer in the comfort of that room.

Archdeacon Pithyon was very happy when I told him that I had known his name for several years. He wanted me to send a set of Hudra. He thinks that the Hudra printed at the Mar Narsai Press in Trichur is a good one. He wanted to order other books too. But unfortunately most of the other Syriac books have gone out of print. Actually they had tried to send a Fax which did not get through to me. They gave me a copy of the e-mail they had sent to me to Trichur in the e-mail address given in the website of the Assyrian church. aprem@md 3.vsnl.net.in. Or to make it simple the message can reach me at aprem@vsnl.com. I tried to retrieve messages from vsnl while I was outside India. But it was not easy. I am advised if I register hotmail address then I can get messages anywhere during my travels, if I have access to any internet.

When I registered aprem@hotmail.com I was told that somebody else has taken that address. So I registered maraprem@hotmail.com. But I am not sure that worked. Now I tried to register a yahoo address as the computer says it is a free e-mail. I do not know why some companies offer free e-mail. Anyhow I registered now maprem@yahoo.com. It worked. But I did not get the address the way I wanted. What I wanted was aprem@yahoo.com. But when I registered, the reply was that somebody else had already taken aprem as well as maraprem. So I had to contend with maprem. That means 'r' missing from the full name, hence my friends wishing to send e-mail to me should remember to add an 'm' before aprem.

I had supper in the house of Mr. Sargon. I was happy to try my little bit of Assyrian language with his children. His

daughter's name is Dumareena. I had met Cor Episcopa Dumara in Teheran. This name Dumareena is the feminine form of Dumara which means wonder. The wife of Sargon is from Iran and from the Chaldean Church. I told them that I had met the Metropolitans of the Chaldean Church. Metropolitan Mar Yohanna Ishayi and his co-adjutor Metropolitan Ramsey in March 1998. Metropolitan Ishoyi died at a ripe old age of 86. I told them that I had also met Mar Thoma Meram Metropolitan of Urmiyah. When I told them about the history of the Assyrian Church and the Chaldean Church they were happy to hear about it. Many of them wish we became one church again as we were before, i.e. in 1552 before Mar Yohannan Sulaqa was consecrated the Patriarch of Babylon by the Pope. We were talking about the history of the Church because we had a deacon, his wife and mother-in-law visiting that home when we went for supper.

The Chaldeans have no priest and regular service of their own rite in Germany. The Chaldeans scattered in Bonn never had a council nor regular spiritual service. They can go to any German Catholic congregation and enjoy the privileges of full communion. But one day I hope that the Chaldeans will organize like our Assyrian Church in Germany so that they could worship in the language of their forefathers. The people from Kerala also organize like this and find it spiritually rewarding to worship in their mother tongue. Although English and German are good languages for the Christians to worship, somehow most of the people feel at home in the languages which they used to worship in.

On Sunday 17th October I was picked up from the place of my stay by Mr. Sargon and David Yacoub. On the way Archdeacon Pithyou Pithyou joined us and drove to the Catholic

Church where I had celebrated Qurbana two and a half years earlier. I preached in English and David Yacoub, who is an engineer management person by training was happy to interpret. As I had my sermon printed in the book 'sermons from the Gospels' (in two volumes), I gave a copy to my interpreter. Therefore It was a little easier for him to translate. I do not always have my speech prepared. I prefer extempore speech. I usually use simple words. It is good to use simple language.

In March 1997 I had celebrated Holy Qurbana in the same Church. The Church was almost full. Still more people could be there. But many of our Assyrians live in distant places from Wiesbaden and they do not own cars. Therefore it was difficult for all people to be there.

I celebrated Qurbana assisted by Archdeacon Pithyou and Shamasha George Marogi Kellaitha. Since it was my second visit I was more relaxed than I suspected. I used simple words after I had looked at the faces of the worshippers. I was not interested in preaching if people were not able to follow my speech. I omitted the reference to the Interpreters Bible Commentary etc... which did not have much appeal to the people or our Assyrian Church.

In India I have used both the Interpreters Bible and Barclay's Commentary. I also use the commentary of Ishodad of Merv knowing that the audience would have respect and thereby better wisdom. My speech was short. But I know short was better, not only for my interpreter, but also for my listeners who were not sure whether the interpretation was correct or not.

The sermon was about the labourers in the vineyard all of whom got one denari each while some people worked only for

one hour. The summary and message was clear. We have no right to demand from God certain favours. We should do our duty to humanity. Fr. Emmanuel, former priest of that parish, was present for the Qurbana. I wished if our people were integrally prepared for unity, our faith would be stronger. It is a pity that we have divisions and disagreements and in most cases it is not totally difficult to solve them. But we are short of peacemakers in our society. I wish and pray that our Assyrian Church and other churches make better progress, the spirit of reconciliation coming about. There is no magic formula for reconciliation in various situations. I hope when we pray we find solutions to problems.

Archdeacon Pithyou was assisting in my Qurbana for the first time. He told me after the service that he was pleased that I, who is not an Assyrian, was able to do the liturgy of Addai and Mari properly. I had not taken my Thakhsa this time. But I used the Thaksa printed by Rev. Joseph Kellaitha in the Assyrian Press in Mosul in 1929. We read the Onitha d Qanke, Shuraya, Zumara and Onitha de raze from the Hudra.

They said that they were in need of at least one set of Hudra. The Archdeacon thinks that at least twenty five sets of Hudra books would be sold in Germany if the books were easily available in the country. To order books from India and wait for three or four months for the books to arrive by surface mail is very annoying even for the patient buyer. Therefore the best way was to make five sets or so every time in every city where the Assyrians were living. I know that there are bookshops in our churches in Chicago as well as in Sydney, Australia.

I feel that there is something more to be done to make

communication more effective. Because when books are written with some extra care, and if nobody reads such books it will be a pity. As a writer I can honestly admit that our church does not give much encouragement to those who write books about our faith and our history. I do not feel competent to suggest a solution. I feel something has to be done to encourage people to read more books. Our Churches in the Diaspora should know and read more books from India.

After Qurbana there was a reception and breakfast in the Roncalli Auditorium, owned by the Catholics. As soon as our Mass was over our worshippers went to the Roncalli Hall for the formal breakfast and reception. Mr. Lohrs who was in charge of administration was present there before I reached the Roncalli hall. After breakfast Mr. Sargon welcomed me on behalf of the committee of our congregation in Germany.

I made a speech in which I explained to the congregation about the last meeting of the MIXED COMMITTEE FOR THEOLOGICAL DIALOGUE held in Venice. I explained to them the efforts of the last Synod in which we recognized the holy orders of the brethren in the Old Calendar hierarchy. Although much progress has not been made by the old calendar group in responding to the decision of the Synod it was a right step by our Synod to recognize them and pave the way to the reunion of our Church of the East which split only in 1968. If we explore the possibility of the union of the two groups of the split of 1552, it should be much more possible to resolve the dispute that caused it in 1968 within our Church.

About the 23rd anniversary of the Patriarchal consecration of His Holiness Mar Dinkha IV, I explained to them that day

was the day of the Patriarchal consecration 23 years ago. I also reported of the Episcopal consecration of Mar Aprim Athniel of Sarespeedo, in Syria during the previous Sunday in our new cathedral of Hassake, Syria.

I also announced that Qasha Khamees was going to be consecrated as Bishop in Dohuk with additional charge of the church in Russia. Mar Geevarghese Sliwa, Metropolitan of Iraq, had appointed him priest in Moscow some five years earlier. He was able to learn the language and it would be good for the re-organization of the Assyrian church in Russia. As there was no priest or congregation for our Church under USSR, it will take some time to organize all the Assyrians to come under their old faith preserved by their forefathers.

As the Assyrian community reception meeting was about to end I invited Mr. Lohr to speak to us a few words, which he graciously did. We are grateful that the Catholic Church in that area was considerate of the spiritual needs of the Assyrian community. I told him that the German Catholic Bishops were kind enough to grant a scholarship to one of the Indian deacons (new priest) Jose Jacob Vengassery was able to study in Regensburg and later earn a Masters Degree from the University of Heidelberg. Now he serves as a parish priest in Trichur.

The Catholic priest of the parish next to the Roncalli Hall came and met me for a short while. As he had other religious rites to perform on that Sunday morning he took leave of us. I got the impression that the Catholic community in Wiesbadan area are very friendly to us and I understand that they are considering favourably our request to provide an office room for our Assyrian congregation.

C H A P T E R 10

BONN AGAIN

On Monday 18th October I left Mainz railway station to Bonn at about 10.43 morning. I saw a man seated opposite to me busy with his computer. So I started typing on my laptop. The other passengers were wondering what this bearded fellow was doing. They must have thought that I was playing some card games in my computer. But I was doing serious work, if one can call writing a travelogue a serious work. I know that it is difficult to get time to write travelogues after I reach Trichur because there will be more serious work to attend to. Most of the passengers may not find it easy to speak English. So my best way of utilizing the time at my disposal in the train was either to read some books or write some books.

On Tuesday October 19th, Marlene and Sigfried Muller, who are my hosts in Bonn took me to the Museum. It is a very informative place. The entrance to the Museum was without any entrance fee. It has educational and historical value. Many students were visiting this place. The history of Germany and the political parties exhibited with the help of pictures and videos. There is a picture of changing the sign board of the Adolf Hitler Strasse to Bahnhof Strasse. It is something like the Indians replacing the names of British masters with Indian names.

I am very happy to visit Jenny and Christopher in Bornheim Merten close to the city of Bonn. Last time when I visited them. Bonn was the capital of Germany. After the unification of the

East and West Germany, Berlin once again got prominence and now Berlin is the capital. I know it is not easy for all people to sell immediately their houses and buy new ones in Berlin. So many people go to Berlin on Mondays and return to their homes in Bonn on Saturdays.

I noticed one difference in the Mullers home this time. There is a computer, a desktop. Christopher is learning English language on this computer with the help of a CD cassette to learn English grammar. Everyday I wonder how these computer programmes are made. How much more one can learn if one has these tools to learn! It is a good exercise to learn. I can learn other languages too with the help of the computer. My friend in Chicago Deacon Lawrence Namato promised a CD ROM he made to teach the modern Assyrian language. Whenever I visit Assyrian homes I wish I spoke their language.

The climate was good this time. It is not very cold. It is not warm either. I think that it is about 11 degree centigrade. I need an overcoat when I go outside the room. Inside the house it is warm, because it is well heated. This is one of the problems of the big churches in Europe. You have to spend a lot of money to keep the worshippers warm. If they are physically cold they will be cold in their attitude to the priest who does not work to get the heating inside the church done. I hear that some churches find it difficult to have heating arrangements. I remember in Vienna once we had to shiver even inside our woollen overcoats.

Jenny and Christopher are from the Mar Timotheus Memorial Orphanage in Trichur. They were adopted by Sigfried and Merlene Muller. They had come to Trichur in connection

with the legal proceedings of adoption. I made friends with this family while at Trichur and later in Germany. My visits to Bornheim gave me the opportunity of a home away from home. In my conversation with Sigfried and Merlene Muller, I learned a lot of things about Germany. Usually I stay with the Assyrians or Indians. Very rarely do I get an opportunity to live with the Europeans. My travelogues testify to this truth.

In the house of the Mullers I saw the book on Mundarmonika (Mouth Organ). Both Christopher and Jenny learn mouth organ. Since I like music I am giving below the notes of some songs which I think my readers will enjoy.

strophe\ refrain:

Jingle Bells \Jingle Bells \jingle all the way

Oh, what fun it is to ride in a one-horse-open sleigh

!:// 555\555\ 56445 \ 555\ 5555\ 55445

xxx\xxx\ xxxlx \ I I I I I xx xxllxllx

5555555\ 56445 555 5555 5566544

Agnes Frielinghaus is a well experienced teacher of mouth organ. She claims that all young people up to the age of 80 (so she says) can learn to play mouth organ. She teaches Christopher and Jenny. They recently produced a CD of songs and choruses which are easy to learn. She has also a Booklet of these songs where the numbers are given. The children can quickly learn to play those songs on their mouth organs.

I have noted some down hoping that I can use those notes for trying them on my SITAR which is a famous stringed instrument in Indian music. I will try it on the keyboard too. I am mixing up western and Indian music, not because I am a genius in music, but because of lack of adequate knowledge in

the field of music.

We Shall overcome	we shall over come,	we shall overcome some day,
Oh, deep in my heart,	I do believe,	we shall overcome some day.
6 6 6 6 6 (5) 5	6 6 6 6 6 (5) 5	6 6 6 7 7 8 \ 7 6 7 6 6 \
(6 7) 7 7 6 6 \	6 6 5 5 \	6 6 4 5 5 4 4 \

SIXTH VISIT TO MUNICH

On Wednesday 20th October 1999 when my plane landed in Munich airport it was my sixth visit to Munich. The first one was in June 1977. I was returning after my first visit abroad after becoming a Metropolitan. I had a friend Dr. P.C. Matthew from Kerala studying in Munich. Cardinal Ratzinger was the new archbishop of Munich. There was a Corpus Christi procession where the new Cardinal was walking through the roads. I also joined that procession. My friend took me to the University of Munich and the Olympic swimming pool of the 1972 Olympics in that city.

The second visit to Munich was in 1990. I had come to Grobenzell near Munich to visit Brigitte and Paul Huber and their two children adopted in 1981 from Mar Timotheus Memorial Orphanage, Saritha and Thomas Aprem. I went to the Lutheran Church in Grobenzell and also visited some places in Munich.

The third visit was in 1994. The fourth was in March 1997. By this time the Huber family moved to Munich. In May 1999 I made my fifth visit to Munich when I went to present a Paper in the Seminar, arranged by the Martin Luther University of Halle/Wittenburg. Then the Hubers asked me, "Why not you come on October 21, as You are going to be in Venice for the Dialogue with the Catholic Church?" Thus this sixth unexpected visit to Munich.

The purpose of this visit was to celebrate the 18th

anniversary of the arrival of Saritha and Thomas in Germany. They were born in Trichur and taken care of by my mother in the Mar Timotheus Memorial Orphanage. When my mother donated her own land and worked hard for founding this Orphanage she never thought that she was doing an international work. But with adoptions abroad the children from the M.T.M. orphanage went the world over.

The 18th anniversary celebration was a dinner with food prepared in the Indian restaurant and served in the Huber home. Saritha asked each one of the guests what special food they wanted and ordered it according to our special taste. I did not eat meat or sweet things; so I ordered Malai Koftha curry and lassi with salt. Anyhow we had plenty to eat. The yellow rice, papadam, sauce, samosa, pakoras etc... were in addition to the main dishes we ordered. There was good fellowship. To add to our joy Nikola Chitra, another girl adopted from our orphanage was also there. Her parents Ilse and Harald Grunzweig were there along with Martin adopted in to same family. Martin had become my friend during my early visits to the Grunzweigs family.

Grandma (Paul's mother) had cooked two kinds of cakes for the occasion. They had used sugar which can be used by diabetic people like me. What a consideration for guests !

When my people in India invite me for wedding parties I tell them that I am a diabetic which they already know. Still they have only sweets which are dangerous for diabetic people. If I ask for tea or coffee without sugar, they say, it is difficult to get tea or coffee without sugar, because the caterers have made tea and coffee with milk already sweetened. Therefore it is

impossible to get tea or coffee without sugar. They tell me that I can use sugared tea or coffee on special occasions and increase the dose of my insulin.

I tell them that If I get a chance to legislate I will make laws to prosecute the people who aid and abet (that is legal language) diabetic patients to die sooner by throwing such parties. I feel sad for the people who had to undergo this difficulty quite often. We abstain from accepting their invitations. Some people show some consideration to their invited guests by choosing items other than, cake, chocolates, laddu, jilebi, orange, ice cream and sugared tea or coffee. There is not a single item the guest can taste. I write it here on behalf of the many other diabetic patients who are often tempted to taste laddu or jilebi. I have not eaten them since I became diabetic in 1977. That is the secret of my keeping away from doctors.

Our visit to the Cathedral of Freising was interesting. When I saw Freising I asked Saritha, "Does it mean free to sing?" Frei in German means free. But such interpretation of mine is not thought of by the Germans. They are already music loving people all over the country of Beethoven. We walked around the Cathedral which more than one thousand, one hundred years old. There is a Seminary and the ordination of the priests usually took place in the Church. There is a pipe organ and there is the recital of music in the Cathedral where guests are allowed to attend. I saw the name of Francis Xavier and so we stopped to see the beautiful painting of St. Francis Xavier preaching to the people of India and Japan. It is a beautiful painting on the top of a Building named after this saint who converted many people in India in the 16th century.

Rita Dietz is a retired nurse. She is a great friend of the Huber family. She was the one who helped Brigitte Huber when she came to Munich exactly 19 years ago with two babies from India. Saritha was two and a half and Thomas was only half an year old. It was very difficult for the babies to face the cold weather. The trip from Trichur to Munich too was horrible. To bring one baby was difficult and to bring two adopted children totally strangers to the western way of living must have been nightmare. But they do not recall it now. the Parents were interested in their children knowing that they were lucky to grow in this new surroundings. Therefore they made photocopies of all the correspondence between India and Munich prior to the adoption and afterwards, the court orders in India and the registration in Germany. The struggle they went through during the past eighteen years will be another interesting story for them to record before they forget. After they get older it will be difficult to recall them and record them. I know all are not writers, even I myself, after writing over fifty books. Now I do not get time to write books. Hence I am doing it on my computer while travelling in the plane. I make mistakes by pressing the wrong key that is the control key. Very soon my battery will be down and I will have to close down my lap top. Since a movie is on the screen, the lights in the cabin are dimmed for others to watch the movie.

On Friday 22nd Oct. I concluded my journey. Mrs. Huber drove me to the airport in Munich. As I got through the security one customs officer asked me to open the laptop. Then he said, "Start it". It took a few seconds for me to understand what he was asking. He repeated his order. So I started it. He made sure that it was a real laptop, the one that works and not

something like a bomb covered in a laptop. Anyhow I was happy to hear the words “You can go”. If he wanted to check all the files in my laptop I had no option. If he empties all files, that will be disastrous. All the notes I have taken in Rome and the notes of the journey will be lost.

My flight from Munich was short, about fifty minutes. At Frankfurt I had to go through customs again. This officer however did not ask me to open and start the computer. I was glad to be in the flight to Mumbai before 2 p.m. That was 12.30 after midnight according to the Indian time.

THAILAND CONFERENCE

On October 25, 1999 many of the Bishops from different Christian denominations gathered at the Madras International Airport. We were happy to meet several old friends. Some were new Bishops. We were going for a Bishops' Conference arranged by the Campus Crusade International .

Three hours after our Indian Airlines flight took off from the Madras airport we reached Bangkok. We were met by the organizers of the Bishops' Conference. All of us were taken to Tongtara Hotel. in Bangkok city. Our stay and conference sessions were all in the same building.

Dr.Bill Bright, the founder President of the Campus Crusade International, came all the way from America to address us. He is about 80 years old. His enthusiasm to address as many sessions as possible in as many parts of the world is amazing. I am sure that he will not have time to write travelogues. He perhaps does not know the number of foreign trips he undertakes. Although he is the winner of the prestigious Templeton Prize which is costlier than the Nobel Prize, he appears to be humble.

During the sessions of four days Dr.Jennings, Dr.Bill Bright and the staff of the Campus Crusade International explained to us their concerns. The Bishops from Pakistan and Indonesia shared their experiences.

I was happy to meet Dr.H.Doloksaribu, the Methodist

Bishop from Indonesia. He told me that there is an Assyrian Orthodox Church in Djakarta. They worship like the Muslims. "They must be our people," I replied. I told the bishop that our worship may look like that of the Muslims to Protestants. Even the Assyrian language may sound like Arabic to outsiders. I said that it would be good to investigate. The Bishop offered to help me meet those Christians if I visited Djakarta.

Looking at the many Bishops present in the conference, Bishop William Moses, former Moderator of the Church of South India, cracked a joke. When two Bishops were flying there was some trouble to the engine of the aircraft. The passengers began to panic. One of the Bishops said to the passengers, "Don't worry. Two Bishops are praying for our safety". The pilot of the aircraft remarked, "I rather have one engine working than two Bishops praying."

The delegates from Kerala sang songs in Malayalam. Then the North Indians began to sing songs in Hindi. I joined the Hindi group also. I always enjoy Hindi devotional songs ever since I studied in the Hindi language area in 1957. I used to sing in Hindi choir in the Leonard Theological College, Jabalpur in those days. I felt young again.

A Muslim diamond merchant from Tamilnadu invited Tamil Bishops for a meal. He gave expensive mementos recognizing the contributions we have made to the Tamil people. I am not a Tamil Bishop. The Tamil Bishops invited their Malayalee cousins also for the meal. After the delicious meal when the Muslim millionaire gave mementos I accepted one.

Some Tamil Bishops who did not get the mementos began to grumble. I gave my memento to a Tamil Bishop. I knew that

I have not done much to the Tamil people. But I began to justify my keeping the memento to myself, because I have founded a School in Madras. Instantly I said to myself that I should not be greedy. I could manage without a memento . But here is a Tamil Bishop who wanted to possess it. I could manage without it. Let it go the possession of the man who could be more happy with it. He would be unhappy without it I felt happy when I parted with that gift. Many of us would be happy if we part with the extra things that we do not need.

On 30th October we flew back from Bangkok to Madras. I rushed to the railway station to catch the train to Trichur. Next morning I was present at the Marth Mariyam Cathedral for the Qudash Idtha festival.

This was the shortest foreign trip I ever undertook. It was indeed a blessed time of singing , praying and studying the Bible together.

BOOKS BY DR MAR APREM

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27. Washington to New York pp. 133, 1992
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31. Salzburg to Boston	pp. 140,	1995
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57. Syriac Manuscripts in India		
58. Poems & Prayers		
59. History of the Assyrian Church in the 20th century		
60. Advanced Aramaic		

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

The Most Rev. Dr. Mar Aprem (formerly George Mookken) was born in Trichur, Kerala, India, in June 1940. Educated in India, England and America, he specialised in Church History. He was the President of the Church History Association of India.

He holds two master's degree in Church History, one from the United Theological College, Bangalore (M. Th, of Serampore, 1966) and the other from the Union Theological Seminary, New York (S.T.M. degree, 1967). He was a candidate for Doctor of Theology (Th.D) degree at Princeton Theological Seminary, U.S.A., when he was consecrated bishop in Bagdad, Iraq in 1968. Later he earned his D.Th. degree from Serampore University, near Calcutta.

Ordained a deacon on June 25, 1961, he became a priest on the day he completed twenty five years of age on 13 June, 1965. He was consecrated Bishop on 21st September, 1968 and promoted as a Metropolitan eight days later in Bagdad.

His biography appears in the International Who's Who of Intellectuals, Vol. 6, Cambridge, the International directory of distinguished leadership, first Edition, U.S.A. and others.

He was given 'Men of Achievement' Award of the International Biographical Centre, Cambridge, England in 1984, and the 'Medal of Merit' of the Coptic Orthodox Cultural Centre, Venice for his cultural and ecumenical achievements.

Since 1968, he is the Head of the Church of the East in India with his headquarters in Trichur. He is active in several religious and social organisations all over India.



Holy Synod at Mar Geevarghese Cathedral, Chicago April 27, 1999.



Chicago, April 1999 Mar Aprem with his brothers (Jos and Addison) and sister Bela along with Asha, Grace Mary, Dr. Sonia, Dr. Saje Alex. Prof. Alexander Alex and sister's grand daughter Christina.



Fr. Benyamin, Priest of the Assyrian parish in Dertoit, Michigan along with the Treasurer of the Committee Mr. Sargon and another Assyrian friend.



Dr. Davy Emmatty Ph. D. and Engineer Wilson Padavan in his home in London Ontario.



Wilson Padavan and Sicily with their children Donna & Dean.



The Trichurians in Toronto : Left to Right : Dr. Davy Emmatty, Tony Emmatty with Molly and children, Sunny Nellengara and Shanta, Inasu Mookan & wife Molly, Darma Mookan with wife, son, mother-in-law. 1st May 1999.



Jan enjoying the Bible story of Joseph being put in a pit. Binoy Jacob joins the laughter. Photo taken by Sajan's mother, Nishi Kurien Ph.D.



Tony Emmatty and wife Molly with Bishop Michael John, retired C.S.I. Bishop from Kerala serving as a pastor for the C.S.I. Kerala people in Toronto.



Inasu Nadakavukaran and his wife Aisha with Bishop Michael John and Mar Aprem.



Reception after lecture at Berlin University.
Left to Right : Abouna Tozman of the Syrian Orthodox Church,
Mr. Hrik, Managing Director of the parish, Abuna Guney.



Mor Afrem parish, Berlin,
Left to Right : Prof. R. Voigt, Mar Aprem, Dr. U. Nieten, Abuna Teber (Syrian Orthodox priest) Fr. Prof. Baby Varghese of Kottayam.



French Cathedral (Huegenoths) Berlin.
Left to Right : Cathedral guide, Prof. R. Voigt, Mar Aprem, Fr. Baby Varghese.



Mar Aprem greeting Anaika, daughter of Seena and Jolly Paliassery on her birthday on 1 May 1999 in their home in Toronto. Seena's mother Mrs. Anna George Mohan Thaikadan, Dr. Davy Emmatty and

Sunny Nellengara are also seen in the photo.



Berlin's Branden Burger Door (Formerly Berlin Wall) Prof. Voigt and Mar Aprem. 11 May 1999.



Assyrian Vatican Dialogue in October 1999 in Venice, Italy. The head of the Assyrian Delegation (Bishop Mar Aprem) and the head of the Vatican Delegation Bishop William Kasper are in the middle.

Prelates at the Holy Synod, Chicago, April 1999



Standing : Mar Emmanuel (Canada), Mar Aprem Khamis (Arizona), Mar Meelis Zaya (Australia & New Zealand), Mar Bawai Soro (Seattle), Mar Odisho Oraham (Sweden & Europe).

Sitting : Mar Geevargis Sliva (Iraq), Mar Narsai de Baz (Syria, Lebanon & Europe),
Mar Kharonia Dinkha IV (Catholikos Patriarch) Mar Aprem (India).